Child Blessing and Dedication Services

Dedications of Children, Parents, and The People of God

Let the little children come to me ....

LUKE 18:16

Disciples Home Missions
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
P.O. Box 1986
Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986
Dear Friends,

We are pleased to offer this edition of *Child Blessing and Dedication Services*. You will find a variety of services and ideas from which to choose. We hope you find one that meets the particular needs of your faith community.

We are always interested in your ideas and suggestions, and would be very pleased to receive copies of services you perform.

In Christ,

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Dedication of a Child—The Parents—and the People of God

We welcome in God’s name, _ (parents’ names), who have brought their child, to be dedicated to God, the maker of all things and giver of all life. In this act of dedication we follow our Lord Jesus Christ, who took little children in his arms and blessed them. Let us now hear the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7  
Psalms 103:17, 18  
Psalms 127:1-3  
Matthew 18:1-5  
Matthew 19:13-15  
Mark 8:36-37  
Mark 10:13-16  
Luke 9:46-48  
Luke 18:15-17  
Colossians 3:20-21  
Ephesians 6:1-4

Let us pray:

O God, maker of all things, creator of all life, we praise thy name for thy marvelous work in all the world.

For blessing these thy servants with the gift of this child:

_We thank thee, O God._

For the wonder of creation which is manifested at birth:

_We thank thee, O God._

For the opportunity of service and of love which is given to each of us to manifest toward this child:

_We thank thee, O Lord God. Amen._

To the parents:

In presenting this child to God, do you promise that through the grace given you and in partnership with the Church, you both will teach him/her the truths and duties of the Christian faith; and by prayer, precept, and example will bring him/her up in the discipline and instruction of God?

_We do._

(Ask congregation to stand)

To the congregation:

Do you, as members of this congregation, acknowledge and accept the responsibility, together with the servants, of teaching and training this child, that he/she, being brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, may be led in due time to trust Christ as Savior, and confessing him as Lord in baptism. If so, will you signify your acceptance of this responsibility by responding, “We do.”

__________________________

(child’s name)

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Let us pray:

Even as Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus to the temple that he might be consecrated to your service, so these parents have brought this little one to this place of worship to present her/him to you. Give insight and love that this child under their guidance may grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with thee and humankind. Grant that we, your people, may truly be a household of faith to this child, providing her/him with food for the spirit to nourish her/him through the year of her/his growth into maturity. With deep gratitude to you for this child we dedicate her/him, her/his parents, and ourselves to the end that her/his life may be a blessing to you and a service to humankind through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Name: ____________________________________________

Date of Birth: _____________________________________

Date of Dedication: _________________________________
A Service for the Blessing of Little Children
(Adapted from Worshipbook by G. Edwin Osborn, William Sloane Coffin)

(This service, and several following, are written to dedicate a number of children and parents at one time but can be changed to use with only one family.)

The parents having presented themselves and the children at the front of the sanctuary, let the minister say:

Beloved in Christ, since God in his goodness has visited our brothers and sisters, ____ (names of all parents), with the gift of these little children, they have come to present them to the Lord. It is fitting and proper that they should do this.

In former times, Hannah presented her son, Samuel, to God in thanksgiving.

The Psalmist has written, “Lo, children are a heritage from the Lord.”

The parents of our Lord Jesus Christ took him as an infant to the Temple to present him to God, and in the days of his ministry, he himself said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.”

So these parents have brought their children in the time of their innocency into the church to present them before God and to consecrate themselves to the holy responsibility laid up for them.

Let us pray:

Mighty God: by your love we are given children through the miracle of birth. May we greet each new son and daughter with joy, and surround them with all faith, so they may know who you are and want to be your disciples. Never let us neglect children, but help us to enjoy them, showing them the welcome you have shown us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

To Individual Parents:

____ (parents’ names)__, in presenting your child for blessing, you announce your faith in Jesus Christ, and show that you want your child to study him, know him, love him, and serve him as his chosen disciple.

Show your purpose by answering these questions. Do you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

I do.

Do you intend your child to be his disciple, to obey his word and show his love?

I do.
Will you so live by word and deed that your example shall cause your child to confess Jesus Christ as Savior and to be baptized into him?

I will.

Let the people stand. An elder or minister shall address the people and the parents presenting the children, saying:

Our Lord Jesus Christ ordered us to teach our children. Do you, the people of the church, promise to tell these children the good news of the gospel, to help them know all that Christ commands, and, by your fellowship, to strengthen their family ties with the household of God?

We do.

Then the minister may take each child in her/his arms, asking:

What is the name of this child?

The name of this child is ________________.

_(name of child)_ , for you Jesus was born, for you he lived, for you he suffered and died, and yet you know nothing of this. But this is to fulfill the Scripture, “We love, because he first loved us.” Now, _(name of child)_ , may the Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Let us pray:

Almighty God, giver of life, you have called us by name, and pledged to each of us your faithful love. We pray for your children, _(names of children)_ . Watch over them. Guide them as they grow in faith. Give them understanding, and a quick concern for neighbors. Help them to be true disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son and servant, and our risen Lord.

God of grace, Father of us all, we pray for parents, _(names of parents)_ . Help them to know you, to love with your love, to teach your truth, and to tell the story of Jesus to their children, so that your word may be heard, and bring about plans for us you have promised, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Then let the minister add the benediction:

May you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory now and forever. Amen.
Child and Parent Dedication

(Have parents and children come forward to stand before the congregation)

Minister: Do you promise to pray for your children, and with them as well, seeking their growth in their experiences of God and God’s love?

Parents: We do.

Minister: Do you promise to do whatever is in your power to train them for lives of fellowship and service to God.

Parents: We do.

Minister: Do you promise to lead them, both by what you say and by what you do, to believe that Jesus is their Friend, and can be their Teacher.

Parents: We do.

Minister: Let us pray. O God, gracious and merciful, grant us your blessing as we wait before you. Teach these, your servants, the sacredness of parenthood, and the beauty of the home. Help them to see in these children an opportunity from you, and help them so to walk before you that these tender feet may find the sure path of truth and faith. Give them the patience for their tasks that they will need. Bless these families with strength of body and mind and soul, and grant that their growth may ever be toward you; we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
Child Dedication
(West Point Christian Church)

GREETING

Dearly Beloved:

We are here to celebrate life!
We are here to celebrate the wonder that is birth, the mystery that is love, the fulfillment that is marriage, and the glory that is God.

We rejoice with thankful hearts! God has accepted us as partners in creation. God has entrusted to us, through this blessed and happy couple a child, a gift of life through birth. We shall rejoice with grateful hearts that God has entrusted to us this child.

We celebrate the covenant of marriage established in trust by the God of love, whom we see in Jesus the Christ. We affirm this covenant and charge these parents to dedicate their lives in faith, to be human in God and his purpose to this child.

We celebrate God’s rich grace. “We love, because God first loved us through Christ. This service of presentation is a visible sign of the grace and presence of God’s spirit.”

SCRIPTURE

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children.

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arms.

And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them.

Jesus said: “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for such is the kingdom of God.”

ADDRESS

You have brought your child here desiring that he/she be embraced in the gathered household of faith, which is the entrance into the love and care of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This is a service of thanksgiving as we offer to God the gratitude of our hearts for the hope and happiness which comes into our lives by the presence of a child. It is a recognition of God as the giver of life and a testimony that all children are God’s. This service, also, is one of dedication and consecration: the dedication of your child to God; and your own consecration to new and holier fidelity that you may give to your child the best that you have learned of the ways and love of God.
FRIENDS

In presenting your child to be embraced in the gathered household of faith, you announce your faith in Jesus Christ, and show that you want your child to study him, know him, love him and serve him as his chosen disciple.

Will you endeavor to live before this child in such a way that life might become Good News to her/him?
   I will.

Do you promise that you will teach this child the principles of our Christian religion, and that you will pray with her/him and for her/him.
   I do.

Will you endeavor to keep this child under the ministry and guidance of the church until, by the power of God, he/she shall accept for herself/himself the call of Christ to a covenantal relationship to be an instrument of his witnessing community?
   I will.

By what name shall this child be called?

   name of child

You have been born into a household of faith and on behalf of thee, I embrace you into the gathered household of faith (in hoc signo) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This child is now received into the love and care of God’s people, the Church, in the good hope that hereafter she/he will be led to receive its ministry and guidance, until under God she/he shall accept for herself/himself the gift of salvation, and covenant herself/himself as a responsible member of the Church.

CHARGE TO THE CONGREGATION

Rearing a child is not done in a vacuum. It is a shared responsibility—the home, the church, the school, the community. You, the church, have a special duty. “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. You are laborers together with God; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

It is your sacred obligation, along with the parents of this child, to enfold her/him in the sheltering arms of the church, upholding him/her in good and protecting him/her from all that is evil. Remembering the words of our Lord Jesus who said, “As ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me,” and “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Do you, therefore, pledge before God that to the best of your ability you will live Godly and righteous lives before all; that you will seek to maintain here a true house of God; that you will strive to make this a Christian community in which this child and all children will grow as sons and daughters of Almighty God.
We do.
Dedication Service

Pastor: God came to us as a little child born in Bethlehem’s village. When that child grew up he was to say, “Let the little children come unto me; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” It is in the spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord, that we come to this joyous event this day.

(Names of parents), your love in bringing this child into the world, caring for her/his physical needs, and in creating her/him with love and affection is already evident. Do you pledge before God and this community of faith to do your best to raise her/him as a child of God in a Christian home, that she/he may grow as did Jesus Christ, in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and with the world.

Parents: We do.

Pastor: Do you further pledge that you will do your best to show her/him lives of Christian grace, forbearance, and love, praying with her/him and for her/him; guiding her/him in the gentle paths of love; so that when she/he reaches the age of accountability she/he might desire on her/his own free will to confess her/his faith in Jesus Christ and to be baptized in his name?

Parents: We do.

Pastor: The rose on the pulpit is a symbol of God’s creative love. In its perfect beauty, the power of growth which causes it to blossom in the sunshine, and in its very fragile and temporary existence, it brings us many lessons. God has entrusted one of his most wonderful creations into your hands—a human child. This child will grow; her/his talents and energies and spirit will expand at an unbelievable rate. The destiny of humanity will be different—maybe just a little in our own corner of the world, but maybe greatly different—because this child, like the rose, like each one of us, is finite. (Name of Child) is lent to us by God for our joy and for his glory until the day that she/he too stands before the Heavenly Father. Take this rose with you as a reminder of God’s creativity and of God’s trust in you.

Will the congregation please stand:
"You are laborers together with God; you are God’s field, God’s building," said the Apostle Paul. You are also a community of faith, a true family in Jesus Christ. It is your obligation, along with the parents of this child, to care for her/him, nurture her/him, guide her/him, and direct her/him away from temptation and toward the good. Do you, therefore, pledge as individuals and as the church to live lives which will be an inspiration and an invitation and an example for her/him to follow? Do you pledge to provide for her/his training and education in faith by working with and supporting the church school? Do you pledge to show by word and deed and attitude the joyous, exciting celebrations that life in Christ can be? If so, answer, “We do!”

We do.

O, God of light, each birth brings the promise of new light into the world. Let her/his light shine, that all might see your glory. O God of creativity, grant that this child might grow and develop into the person you want her/him to be, that she/he might fulfill the potential that lies therein. All this in the name of Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.
The Child Dedication Service
in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
(West Des Moines Christian Church)

The Child Dedication Service as an act of Christian Worship in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) becomes a very meaningful expression of faith and love on the part of parents of infants and small children.

The church invites parents to bring their child(ren) to the worship service for dedication, at which time the parents dedicate their child(ren) to the Lord and themselves to the rearing of the child(ren) in a Christian home atmosphere. It is the hope and prayer of the parents and the Church that Christian nurture in the home and Church will encourage the child(ren) to accept Christ and become a follower of the way at the proper age.

This age varies with each child and each church. Some churches begin as early as nine (3rd grade) with Church Membership Classes while other congregations may wait until the twelve-thirteen years (7th grade) to conduct the class. Some children may be ready for membership earlier than others due to various reasons.

The Christian Church does not baptize infants and small children. The Church teaches “believers baptism” and waits until a child chooses personally to make a public confession of faith and be baptized by immersion. This generally happens following church membership classes which are usually conducted in the spring before Easter.

The Dedication Service used at the West Des Moines Christian Church is basically as follows:

At the beginning of the Worship Service, immediately following the Call to Worship and Gloria Patri, the minister invites the parents to bring their child(ren) to the chancel and stand in front of the Communion Table for the dedication and blessing. (Grandparents, godparents, etc., are welcome to join the parents.)

The minister begins the services with the following questions directed to the parents:

Do you parents promise to pray for and with this child (these children) for (his, her, their) growth in knowledge of God, and in the spiritual life?

Parents respond: We do.

Do you promise to do all you can to lead (him, her, them) at the proper age to confess faith in Christ?
Parents respond: We do.

What is the name of this child?

Parents respond:  (first and middle name)

The name of this child is  (full name)

The minister then gives a cherrywood cradle cross to the parents for the child explaining the story of the small cross like this:

With all their hearts, the Dutch believed in this passage of Scripture (Matthew 19:14) when Jesus said: Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of Heaven. For centuries, they placed cradle crosses over the beds of their infant children—that this symbol of the Christian faith might early become a part of the child’s consciousness.

O Lord, gracious and merciful, grant us your blessings as we wait on you. Teach these, your servants, the sacredness of parenthood, and the beauty of home life. Help them to see in this child (these children) an opportunity from you, and help them so to walk before you that these tender feet may find the path of faith, truth, justice, honor, and righteousness.

Give them patience, wisdom, judgment, and heavenly favor in their task. Bless this child (these children), O Lord, with strength of body, mind, and soul, and grant that the growth of this child (these children) may be ever toward you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(After the Prayer of Dedication, the parents receive the Certificate of Dedication from the minister and return to the pew.)
Service of Blessing and Dedication
for Child, Parents, Siblings & Congregation
(Kaye Edwards, Disciples Home Missions)

(This particular service of blessing was designed for Palm Sunday so the first paragraph will have to be altered to use at other times of the year.)

Minister: Dear Friends, today is a day of celebration. We come to celebrate the entry of our Savior, Jesus Christ, into the holy city. As did those ancient people long ago, we shout our hosannas this morning and we give thanks for the ministry of healing, understanding and love that Jesus has brought into the world.

Because of that ministry of healing, understanding and love, our lives are full of hope, and a child named, ________, comes to us this morning to be blessed. If this child is to have a life directed by the spirit of Christianity, she/he must know throughout her/his life that she/he is cared for and loved. She/he must come to know first-hand valuable lessons taught only by being treated with great tenderness, and by the giving and receiving of forgiveness. She/he will come to know and understand such valuable lessons in her/his home from her/his parents, ______ & ______ and from her/his brothers/sisters, ______ (siblings’ names). But she/he must also learn them from you, her/his faith family.

To nurture a child in the faith is no small task. There are so many stories to tell. There are scriptures to learn and cherish. There is the difficult task of sticking with life in community. There is the difficult discipline of prayer. There is the lifelong task of understanding grace and the unconditional love of God.

It is for this joyous and daunting task of Christian nurturing that the members of (child’s full name)’ family come today to dedicate themselves and, with your witness and support, seek God’s blessing for this child.

Invite the child’s family and the other children of the church to come forward. Talk to the children about the importance of the blessing service, give out pencils or crayons and ask them to make a gift to give to the child being blessed by writing a word or drawing a simple picture that expresses their hope for ______ (child’s name)’.

Ahead of time, ask the sibling(s) or a child from the congregation to be prepared to read the following words from Luke 18:15-17.

And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them; and the Disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to
you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

Minister: _______ & ________, will you, as the parents of _______ promise to pray for and with her/him? Will you tell her/him the stories of faith and teach her/him to read the Bible? Will you nurture her/him in body and mind and spirit so that her/his gifts may glorify God and God’s love for the world?

Parents: We will.

Minister: Will you at this time reconnect yourselves to life in Christian community? A place where you will continue to reach out to others, and a place where you may come to ask for help and support in your task of nurturing this child?

Parents: We will.

Minister: Do you promise to do all that you can to lead ________ toward that time when she/he will come forward to confess her/his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Parents: We will.

If there are siblings . . .

Minister: As her/his brother(s) & sister(s), will you, (names of siblings), promise to love her/him always?

Siblings: I/we will.

Ask the congregation to stand.

Minister: Recognizing both the solemnity and the joy of this occasion, the demands of life ahead for (parents’ names) and their child(ren), will you, as their chosen community of faith, participate in God’s blessing of this child and in the dedication of these parents, by pledging your support through prayers, love and specific acts of caring? If so, please respond, “We will.”

Congregation: We will.

Minister: Let us pray. O God, gracious and merciful, grant us your blessing as we stand before you. Teach these parents, your servants, the sacredness of their vocation. Give to them the needed patience, wisdom, and judgment. Uphold them in your strength and mercy.

And now, O God of love, bless this child with the strength of body, mind and spirit that she/he may grow always toward you. Through Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate every morning. Amen.
Ask the congregation to be seated. Minister takes the child.

Minister: The birth and blessing of children always bring forth a season of expectation. In this spirit of advent I invite you to join in singing, “When God is a Child” as I bring (child’s name) to meet you, her/his faith family.

After children’s gifts are collected and given to the parents, the child is carried around the sanctuary so that the members of the congregation can see and greet her/him.
Service of Blessing and Dedication
for Child, Parents, Grandparents and Congregation
(Kaye Edwards, Disciples Home Missions)

Have a cut or potted flower nearby.

Minister: Dear Friends, just as this flower drinks in the sun, the air and the rain, so a child drinks in the world around her/him. In the love that is present in the home and the faith that is expressed in the church, children find the beginnings of their own life of faith in God.

If (child’s name) life is to be one directed by the spirit of Christian love, then she/he must know love, forgiveness, and tender care. And she/he must know these things first-hand. She/he must know Jesus Christ. She/he must develop the strength and the will to live in a faith community. Hopefully she/he will learn many lessons about Christian love from ministers and church school teachers. But most of all, she/he will learn from the adults in her/his immediate family, her/his parents; and from her/his grandparents. (If there are other siblings, add the following.) And there is no doubt that she/he will learn from her/his older sister(s)/brother(s), (siblings’ names).

To nurture a child in the faith is no small task. There are so many stories of faith that need to be told. There are scriptures of inspiration to learn and cherish. There is the sometimes difficult task of sticking with life in a faith community. This is the discipline of prayer. And there is the life long task of understanding that the love of God is always there for her/him. Grace is there for her/him.

It is for this daunting and exciting task of Christian nurturing that the family of (child’s full name) comes to dedicate themselves today.

Invite the children of the congregation to come forward.

Minister: Read Luke 18:15-17 and talk with the children about the service of blessing and dedication that they will witness.

Sing a verse or two of a hymn and ask the family to come forward during the singing. Hymn suggestion is the first three verses of, “You are Chosen, Ever Loved” (music and words are attached).

Minister: will you, as the parents of , promise to pray for her/him and with her/him? Will you promise to tell her/him the stories of faith and teach her/him to read the scriptures? Will you do your best to nurture her/him in body and mind and spirit for the service to and fellowship with God and in love for her/his fellow human beings?

-16-
Parents: We will.

Minister: Will you at this time recommit yourselves to life in Christian community? A place where you will continue to serve others and a place where you may come to ask for and receive help and support in your task of nurturing this child?

Parents: We will.

Minister: Do you promise to do all that you can to lead _________ to that time when she/he will come forward to confess her/his faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior?

Parents: We will.

Minister: As the grandparents of _________ will you promise to love this family and support these parents in their family life, their life of faith, and their efforts to nurture their children in Christian love?

Grandparents: We will.

The Congregation stands.

Minister: Recognizing both the solemnity and the joy of this occasion, the demands of life ahead for these parents, their children, and their extended family, will you as a people of faith, participate in God’s blessing of this child and in the dedication of these parents, by promising to support them in the years ahead, with your prayers, with your love and with specific acts of caring? If so, please respond, “We will.”

Congregation: We will.

Minister takes child into his/her arms.

Minister: Let us pray. Gracious and merciful God, grant us your blessing as we stand before you. Teach these parents, your servants, the sacredness of their vocation. Help them to see (child’s name) as one especially loved by you. Give to them the needed patience, wisdom, and judgment. Uphold them in your strength and mercy.

And now, O God of love, bless this child with the strength of body, mind and spirit that she/he may grow always toward you. Through Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate every morning. Amen.

The Congregation is seated.

Minister: Please meet (child’s full name).
Child is carried around the sanctuary so that the congregation can meet and greet her/him while the last three verses of "You are Chosen, Ever Loved" or another hymn is sung.
You are chosen, ever loved!
Though in times of doubt or pain
your heart trembles to belong,
you are part of God's domain.

You are chosen, ever loved!
Gift from God we now receive,
only ours to gently hold,
and to share what we believe.

You are chosen, ever loved!
Through the hard or easy years
God will satisfy your heart,
sowing courage in your fears.

You are chosen, ever loved!
God be with you all your days,
calling forth new life in you,
giving you a heart of praise.

You are chosen, ever loved!
This good news with you we share,
for the God who gave you life
holds you in eternal care.

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This song was written to be used with a Service of Blessing or Dedication for an infant or child, or for a Baptism. The occasion for its writing was the blessing of a child who had been adopted. "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption." (Rom. 8:15) We are all adopted by God’s love in Christ.