

# Infant Baptism & Dedication

## Information & Request

Children are a gift from God and at Harvest Ridge we realize our shared responsibility in providing a safe and nurturing spiritual home for all our kids.

As a sign of each child's incorporation into the family of faith we practice both the traditional Christian forms of blessing in Infant Baptism and Infant Dedication.

### **What is the difference between infant baptism and infant dedication?**

Historically, there have been two major views on the sacrament of baptism. The first view is that baptism is only for believers; the second is that baptism is inclusive for both believers and the infant children of adult believers. At Harvest Ridge we're open to both options. As parents, you may choose to baptize your infant, or if you prefer your child to make this a conscious decision of their own, we can dedicate your infant. The choice is yours as parents. Prayerfully consider these options as you seek counsel from the Harvest Ridge pastoral staff as to what is most appropriate for your family. See also "What is the meaning of infant baptism?" and "What is the meaning of infant dedication?"

### **What is the meaning of Infant Baptism?**

On the basis of interpretation of Scripture, some worshippers at Harvest Ridge choose the sacrament of baptism for their infant children. This interpretation is based on the view that the sacraments, both baptism and the Lord's Supper, are means of grace whereby the mystery and drama of the Gospel are proclaimed. In baptism, we proclaim that God decided from the very beginning, that a way be provided for everyone to experience the grace of the Gospel's message and the joy of Christian community. Baptism symbolizes a welcome into the community in which the infant will grow up and one day, hopefully, accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Baptism, however, does not guarantee salvation. The water is the visible sign of invisible grace. It stands both for life and cleansing.

Some may ask how the infant can really understand what is happening in the act of baptism, and therefore, how can it really be effective? This is precisely the point. The grace proclaimed in the sacrament is prevenient, that is, long before we were even here, or thought of, even while helpless like an infant, the Lord knew our need, and has already done what is necessary for our salvation. Baptism points to God's desire on our behalf.

### **What is the meaning of Infant Dedication?**

On the basis of interpretation of Scripture, some worshippers at Harvest Ridge choose to have their infant children presented to the Lord in an act of dedication. This interpretation is based on the view that baptism is a sign of the individual's own choice to follow Christ, and therefore is observed at any age when such a mature decision can be made. Seeking to have the Christian community join them in their desire to raise the infant child in those years of growth and preparation, with every spiritual support of friends and church community,

parents choose to dedicate themselves to this desire by presenting their infants in a service of public worship.

This practice is rooted in the biblical background of Simeon presenting the infant Jesus in the Temple. The observance recognizes both the care of God for the children and the importance of both parents and congregation to provide for their spiritual nurture, always with the view of anticipating baptism.

**Baptism is not “salvation”**

Neither baptism nor dedication should ever be viewed as a “boarding pass to heaven.” Either action on behalf of a child is a wonderful reminder to all of the saving love of God through Jesus Christ, but neither guarantees salvation. That is why we encourage every person at Harvest Ridge to acknowledge their need for salvation and accept God’s offer of amazing grace.

**Sponsors – a.k.a. “God Parents”**

Though it is not required, parents often chose to have two adult friends (usually one man and one woman – not necessarily “a couple”) stand with them on the Baptism/Dedication day to promise prayer and support for both the child and parents. These should be followers of Jesus who love you and take prayer seriously.

**Older Children**

While it is customary to dedicate or infant-baptize only the youngest of children, the baptism of older children becomes appropriate when they articulate a love for Jesus and a desire to follow him. In the case of such kids desiring baptism (usually 5 years of age and older), an appointment should be made with a member of the pastoral staff who will sit down with child and parent(s) to discuss the significance of baptism in their lives.

Infant Baptism	Infant Dedication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water is applied to the infant.</li> <li>• Focuses on the “sovereign grace of God” in baptism.</li> <li>• The sovereign grace of God is not bound to time or human merit.</li> <li>• Parents take a vow to take direct responsibility for the Christian training of the child.</li> <li>• Therefore, we baptize our child in God, believing that his grace through baptism is applicable to such time when our child is of mature age.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No water is applied to the infant.</li> <li>• Focuses on “personal faith in God” in a future baptism.</li> <li>• The personal faith of one being baptized is bound to time and one’s salvation.</li> <li>• Parents take a vow to take direct responsibility for the Christian training of the child.</li> <li>• Therefore, we dedicate our child to God, choosing to delay the baptism until such time when our child is of mature age.</li> </ul>

## HOW TO PROCEED

- **Complete an Infant Baptism/Dedication Request** (at the end of this packet), and return it to the church office as soon as possible.
- **Contact the Senior Pastor to set a date.** While many Sundays may work some may not due to scheduling restraints. Please have several dates in mind when you contact the pastor .
- **Await contact by pastoral staff** in person or by phone, to discuss your request and answer any of your questions.
- **Invite your family and friends to your child's baptism/dedication.** Since the baptism/dedication happens only once in a lifetime, you may want to invite family and friends to share the joy with you on that day. Consider inviting un-churched friends as well as this is a wonderful opportunity for them to witness what faith in Christ means to you.
- **Consider hosting your family and friends for a meal.** Seeing as your family and friends are together and the occasion is celebrative... what a great time for a party!
- **Prayerfully prepare for your infant's baptism or dedication.**
- **Arrive early for your infant's baptism or dedication.**

Please feel free to call the church office, and talk with the pastoral staff if you have any unanswered questions. May God richly bless your family as you prepare for your child's baptism or dedication!

# Request for Infant Baptism or Dedication

Child's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_

I/we request our child be  baptized  dedicated on one of the upcoming Sundays:

\_\_\_\_\_ at the  8:30  11:00 service.

Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Baptized:  Yes  No

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Baptized:  Yes  No

Child's siblings who will be in attendance: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers (identify): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Addresses (identify): \_\_\_\_\_

*For phone and email please circle the preferred contact method.*

Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of request: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent(s) requesting: \_\_\_\_\_

Each parent involved: write a brief story of how you came to faith in Jesus Christ:

*Use the back of this page and additional paper if necessary.*

***When completed, please return to the Harvest Ridge office – thanks!***