

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do the parents have to be members of The Salvation Army?

No. They only need to be willing to agree to the promises in the chosen ceremony.

Does the ceremony have to take place during a public Salvation Army church service?

Not necessarily, though this is usually the case because it can be a part of worship. But it can also be a private occasion, and it can be in another place such as a home or hospital.

Does the child become a member of The Salvation Army by being dedicated?

No. But the parent(s) will be given a certificate to mark the occasion, and The Salvation Army will keep a record of it in a register which the parent(s) may be asked to sign. In addition, the local Salvation Army will have a special interest in the child, and will welcome him/her gladly into the fellowship.

Is the child being forced into something he/she may later regret?

Both the Thanksgiving and Dedication ceremonies focus on the promises and desires of the parent(s). They do not presume to make promises on behalf of the child.

Are the ceremonies only for babies? What about older children?

Thanksgiving and Dedication ceremonies can be held for children of any age, though naturally they are most suitable for children who have not yet reached an age when they can make their own decisions.

Can adopted children have a Thanksgiving or Dedication?

Certainly. Adopted ('chosen') children are precious to parents, and are loved by God.

What about godparents?

Any other members of the family can be part of the ceremony, as the family wishes. There is a Christian tradition of having godparents who promise to take a caring interest in the child. This is admirable and can be very valuable when taken seriously, but it's not a necessity for a thanksgiving or dedication ceremony.

If the ceremony is part of a worship service, can the parents request other elements such as a favourite hymn?

The local Salvation Army officer will be happy to talk over the ceremony beforehand, and parents' requests could well be incorporated in the service. In any case, the officer can always be contacted to find out more.

GOD'S BLESSING ON YOUR CHILD



THE SALVATION ARMY DEDICATION CEREMONY

The happy arrival of a new child into the family can be celebrated with a special religious service. In the Christian churches this is often called a Christening (a kind of baptism into the Church), a Thanksgiving or a Dedication.

The Salvation Army can offer either a Thanksgiving or Dedication, as described in this leaflet. The local Salvation Army officer (minister) will meet with the parents to explain fully how each ceremony happens and what they mean, and help them choose the best for their family.

THE THANKSGIVING CEREMONY

This can be a very simple occasion in which parents express their gratitude to God and say how they want the very best for their child.

In the ceremony the officer will say to the parents:

In presenting this child to God, you wish to give thanks to him for his precious gift. You want him/her to grow up to be healthy, wise and good, and you therefore promise that you will keep from him/her, so far as you are able, everything which is likely to harm him/her in body, mind or soul.

Then the officer will receive the child and say a prayer for the child and the parents.

THE DEDICATION CEREMONY

Some parents wish to make a more specific commitment to bringing up their child with Christian values, until such time as the child makes his/her own decisions about faith. In one sense this is as much a dedication of the parent(s) as of the child. In this ceremony the officer will say to the parent(s):

In the dedication of this child you desire to give him/her fully to God. You wish to thank him for entrusting this precious life into your hands, and you want him/her to be nurtured in all that is pure, lovely and honest. To this end you promise that you will keep from him/her, so far as you are able, everything which is likely to harm him/her in body, mind or spirit.

You also promise that, as he/she grows in wisdom and stature, you will teach him/her the truths of the gospel, encourage him/her to seek Christ as Saviour, and support him/her in the commitment of his/her life to the service of God. You must be to him/her and example of a true Christian.

Then the officer will receive the child in the name of God and on behalf of The Salvation Army, and say a prayer for the child and the parents. Finally the officer will charge the parent(s) to keep the promises they have made.

