

VIA: Child Baptism and Dedication Options

We hope this document will be helpful to explain the options you have in Via regarding baptism and dedication for your children. We recognize Via is a collection of believers from many **different traditions**, and we have the deepest respect for the values these traditions represent. It is our hope that we can all treat one another with love and respect as each one makes decisions that they believe are best for their families. Infant dedication and baptism are both acceptable practices in Via, and are explained further below.

Baptism is the official **initiation** into the family of God that Jesus instituted for all who would follow him. The Bible explains that when we get baptized we are “baptized into Christ,” “becoming one with him and his body, the church.” It is a special event known as a sacrament, where God uses something physical to pour out his invisible grace. Baptism is a very special moment in which the power of God is at work, and is much more than just a symbolic gesture.

In the New Testament and throughout the early church there was no **age** restriction for children to be baptized into God’s family. We see on many occasions where entire households are baptized. Following this example we are happy to baptize any age including infants upon request. We also respect the tradition of infant dedication done in the same spirit of baptism but allowing for children to make the choice of baptism for themselves.

We also recognize the important role that **faith** and **obedience** play in baptism and dedication. God loves to pour out his love and grace, but we also play a role as we faithfully engage and receive. Therefore our recommendations will be divided into two categories, 1) situations where we act on the parent’s faith as with infants, 2) and situations where we are acting on the child’s faith. Both are important steps in the process with either dedication or baptism.

As we have studied the early church, we have discovered the emphasis they had on **training** new believers and the tradition of combining specialized training with baptism called catechism. As we have developed our own youth catechism programs we too have found the powerful role catechism and baptism play in our children taking hold of their own faith.

It was also the tradition of the early church that one must first be baptized into the family of God before participating at the Lord’s Table, **Communion**. Via also holds to this tradition and to help those in the intermediate stage our ministers involved in Communion give a special blessing from the Lord for anyone not yet baptized, knowing fully that Jesus desires to bless all children who would come to him, at whatever stage of life they are in.

With all these important issues in mind, we have the following **recommendations** to help guide parents through the different scenarios to ensure we do things well with our kids which ever process we choose...

Acting on the Parent's Faith – with infant baptisms and dedications, where it depends on the parent's faith, we emphasize how important it is to not treat this step as the pinnacle in your responsibility as parents, but only the beginning, and the critical role that you and the church still play in the training of your children. Therefore...

- We include vows in the process of infant baptism and dedication for parents to commit to the process of modeling and training their children, and expect parents to take these vows seriously.
- We also require that parents requesting either baptism or dedication for their infants have themselves been through some form of Christian catechism to ensure they are equipped to take on this responsibility.
- We also recommend taking advantage of the Kid's Church programs from earliest opportunity and to support these programs by offering at least 1/month volunteer help.
- We also would ask that these children take the specialized Baptism Catechism when they are of age, including an opportunity to commit to baptism vows for themselves.

Acting on the Child's Faith – in this situation we require that children take the specialized Baptism Catechism to prepare them well for baptism and a give them confidence in their life with Christ. If children are not old enough for this class but desire to be baptized, we are happy to accommodate this but would ask the following...

- that parents use the Apostles Creed to teach the child and ensure they have an understanding of the basics (done by a parent who has taken a form of catechism)
- the child join the last class of the specialized Baptism Catechism in which the sacrament of Baptism and Communion are explained. (Make sure to inquire when this class is)
- If after this process you feel as a parent that they have a good understanding of what they are doing and they are sincere in their desires to get baptized, then we are happy to baptize them as well.
- Once these children do reach the appropriate age and readiness we would ask that they take the full Baptism Catechism.

VIA: Child Baptism and Dedication Foundation

Children of the Covenant in the OT

- God has a plan not only for individuals but also for families (Gen 12:3)
- God spoke promises over children before they were even born, before they could express faith. (Gen 12:7)
- God's promises towards children could be believed/received by parents faith (Gen 15:5,6)
- This does not mean that the child's own faith would not be necessary. It was God's will that they should add their faith to their parents.
- This doesn't mean that children of the promise couldn't live outside of those promises.
- Belief in the heart was not enough. For the covenant to be complete God required a physical act to accompany internal faith. Circumcision was called a sign of the covenant for the people of Israel. (Gen 9:12, 17:11, Rom 4:11)
- Not following through with the physical act was considered breaking the covenant. (Gen 17:14)

Children of the Covenant in the NT

- Baptism is the replacement for circumcision (Col 2:11,12)
- The apostles baptized entire households which included children and servants (Acts 2:38,39, 16:15, 16:33, 18:18, 11:13-14, 1Cor 1:16)
- In the writings of the early church fathers we see the continuation of this tradition and the development of infant baptism.

When does my child enter the covenant?

Although baptism is clearly the official initiation into God's family, we can see from scripture that children of believing families have the blessing of being born into the covenant before the physical response takes place, and before they can respond themselves. Therefore we believe God's grace and salvation are there for our children in these intermediate stages.

VIA: Infant Baptism and Dedication Process

Requirements

- Membership at Via is not required but attendance for a min of 3 months is.
- At least one parent must be a follower of Christ, having trusted Jesus for salvation and taken some form of Catechism/training to ensure they are equipped for their vow to train their child in the ways of the Lord.

Process

- Pastor will process and confirm dates
- Dedications and Baptisms will take place as part of our services scheduled throughout the year.
- Dedications involve:
 - Vows by the parents
 - Prayer with anointing oil
- Baptisms involve:
 - Vows by the parents
 - Baptism of infant (will be a form of immersion)
 - Confirmation and prayer with anointing oil
 - First communion (by a tiny spoon)

If you have any **questions** please feel free to talk to any of our Via pastors and let us know how we can support you further. A more detailed document on the subject is available! Contact the church office to start the process for either infant baptism or dedications.