

Family Commissioning



Glad Tidings

Living for God. Living for People.

Parents Partnering with God

A family commissioning is a public commitment you as the parent(s) make before God, your church, and your family. It's about parents devoting themselves to raising their children in the guidance of the Lord. The Bible is clear that children are a gift from the Lord, and the nurturing of a child is an awesome responsibility that requires much wisdom and support. It is important that parents recognize that they are the primary spiritual influence upon their children and to seriously consider the leadership and resources necessary to fulfill this incredible role.

A family commissioning provides an opportunity to express your desire to lead and spiritually nurture your child in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, so your child will grow to live for God and live for people in the way Jesus calls us all. It also provides an opportunity for the whole church family to remember that every individual has a responsibility to live their lives in such a way as to provide a Christlike example to all children and families.

Below, you'll find answers to a few questions about family commissioning. Please, take some time to review them and consider your responses. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact the church office at 905-335-8172.

Why do we practice family commissioning rather than child dedication or infant baptism?

Baptism is reserved for those who are old enough to make a conscious decision to follow Jesus. Scripture provides evidence that Baptism follows an individual's decision to trust Christ alone for salvation (Acts 2:41, 8:12, and 10:47-48). Also, the New Testament records the baptisms of adult believers only. So, we believe that baptism is for those who have made a personal decision to trust Christ alone for their salvation and are publicly declaring their intention to follow Jesus as Lord. It is important then that this personal commitment is made by individuals once they have the maturity and ability to understand what this means. Once your child can explain their desire to follow Jesus in this way on their own, baptism will be a wonderful step of faith to celebrate publicly.

Since the beginning of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) in the early 1900's, our fellowship has refrained from baptizing infants. Primarily, the purpose of this is because we believe that faith in Christ is the pre-requisite for baptism and so there must be personal acknowledgement and recognition of the saving grace of Christ through faith. Most churches, though, have replaced infant baptisms with child dedications. The motivation behind doing so is positive. Typically, it is because the parents wish to celebrate the birth of their child and to publicly seek the blessing of God and the support of the church family as they raise their child. For years in many evangelical churches, these ceremonies have been called baby dedications or child dedications. At Glad Tidings, they will now be known as a family commissioning.

One of the core principles of our family ministry is that we believe that parents are the primary spiritual influence upon their children and that as a church we partner with parents to help them fulfil God's calling to their families. A family commissioning moment in our service is a valuable way to remind our whole church family about this reality publicly. We believe that the preparation with families in the weeks leading up to the Sunday event provides an opportunity for the church to build a deeper partnership with families, helping them develop a spiritual strategy and vision for their families.

It is much more important for us to dedicate ourselves than to dedicate our children. We understand the heart behind baby dedications, and we love celebrating the birth and blessing of every child! However, we never want to lose sight of the fact that God has sent each parent to nurture each child to be sent, by the power of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the gospel. Instead of dedicating a child to this call before they are aware of it, we are preparing and sending our parents to inspire their families to advance towards their mission continually. That is why we expect a level of commitment from parents that isn't usually part of a child dedication. In a family commissioning, parents are dedicating themselves to this family call, much like a bride and groom commit to one another before God.

Are there age restrictions for children to participate in a family commissioning?

There is no set age requirement for a family commissioning. Perhaps, for example, you have become followers of Jesus later in life, and your kids are already school age. We believe you set a great example to your children by participating in a family commissioning together.

Is a family commissioning necessary for the salvation of my child?

Jesus himself was brought to the Temple by Mary and Joseph when he was eight days old to be presented to the Lord. The gospel of Luke records that they did this to participate in their (Mary and Joseph's) personal purification ceremony which was the custom of the day (Luke 2:22). Jesus obviously did not need salvation because he was the son of God. Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ as each person acknowledges their sinfulness and receives forgiveness and eternal life through Christ and His work on the cross.

The family commissioning is not a sacrament; it does not impart grace or eternal life. A child is not more blessed just because they have been part of a family commissioning or less blessed if they haven't. We simply trust that those who are involved in the whole family commissioning journey continually grow to walk in the anointing and favour of God over their lives.

We encourage all parents to regularly speak words of blessing and prayerful encouragement over their child on a regular basis. We recognize that God is a perfectly loving Father and desires to bless every child with his presence and grace. A family commissioning is a public declaration as a church family committing to do everything we can to ensure that all children understand God's love from a young age. As parents, you are publicly declaring your personal intentions to do everything you can as well.

Can a single parent participate in a family commissioning?

Absolutely! Family commissioning signifies the commitment of parents (including single parents) to do their best to raise their child to be a follower of Christ. The decision to have a family commissioning is not dependent upon the beliefs of the other parent. However, we encourage single parents to discuss this step with the other parent. Ideally, both parents—even if not married—would understand the purpose and value of their spiritual impact on their children. We recognize that this may involve some challenging conversations and, as a church, we are committed to supporting single parents in providing a Christian foundation for their children's upbringing.

I'm not a perfect parent, should I still make this commitment before God and the church?

In the Bible, we find parents bringing their children to Jesus. He held these kids, prayed for them, and told us to welcome them. We don't hear of Jesus interviewing all of the parents to ensure that they were doing everything right in raising their children before he accepted and blessed the children. So, we don't believe that parents are required to have everything in their lives perfect to know that Jesus loves and blesses their children or to commit to doing their best to raise them to follow him. If being a perfect parent was a requirement, then none of us would qualify!

We do believe, though, that the public step of family commissioning is a valuable opportunity for you to evaluate some aspects of your relationship with God and the church family to confirm that you are raising your child in the best environment possible for them to become all that God has created them to be. We also encourage you to meet with one of the leaders of our family life ministry to help you put together a spiritual plan for your children and for you as parents. We have a few very helpful resources and people to help you see and build towards God's future for your family.

Steps to participate in a family commissioning at Glad Tidings

Please review the following important points of acceptance for family commissioning:

- We ask parents to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
- We ask parents to be sure that their beliefs line up with our church's Statement of Fundamental and Essential Truths.
- We ask parents to be regular attendees of our weekend services.
- We ask parents who are living together and who are not married to take steps to acknowledge and surrender to God's plan for their relationship before participating in a family commissioning service.
- We ask parents to fill out the family commissioning request form and submit it to the church office (www.gtburlington.org/pdfs/commission.pdf). Someone will contact you shortly after it is submitted to work out dates and details.
- We ask parents to meet with one of our Pastors to have a conversation about your spiritual plan for your family.

We are open to having conversations with you about any of the above statements. Please call the church office at 905-335-8172.