



**PREPARING
FOR A
DEDICATION/
THANKSGIVING**

CEREMONY



QUESTIONS TO ASK

When a family has made the decision to have a Dedication ceremony there are some key questions that you need to ask and consider. Below are some of these key questions along with information we hope you will find helpful. If you have any further questions or need some support, please contact your Divisional Youth Secretary.

WHAT?

What do I need to do?

The decision to have a Dedication ceremony is not made lightly. It is important that we treat this decision with the respect it is due; it is a privilege to walk with and support the family during this time. You will need to make some time to meet with the family to discuss the things that need to happen before the ceremony can take place. We would encourage you to meet with the family on at least one occasion to go through what the ceremony is and what the family would like to include. Opportunity is given for the family to compose a prayer or blessing for their child, and you may need to assist them in this. Examples of a prayer and a blessing are included at the end of this document.

What resources will I need?

There are a variety of certificates that can be used for this purpose, and they are able to be purchased through Trade North (Supplies and Purchasing). These include two varieties of Dedication certificates and one Thanksgiving certificate. Also available are a 'Welcome to Ready to Crawl/Ready to Play Ministry' certificate and a 'Dear Little One' frame that can be customized for the child. (See samples of certificates on [page 7](#).)

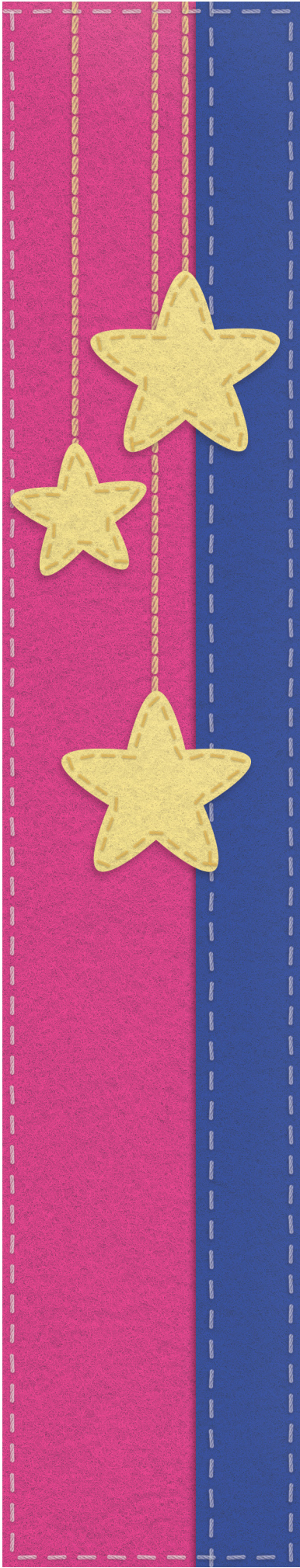
There is a great resource that you might like to use with the family as they prepare for the dedication of their child. The Parent Cue website holds lots of resources, e.g., a blog, videos, podcasts etc. that are helpful to support parents. In the video section there are six clips that would be helpful for parents as they explore some key parenting strategies to support their child (www.theparentcue.org).

What needs to be included in a Dedication Ceremony?

Specific promises and commitments are made by the family before God—refer to The Salvation Army Ceremonies Book, chapter 3, Section 2 for the formal part of the ceremony. We would also encourage you to speak with the family about anything specific they may like to have included in the ceremony. It is also good to involve people in key roles in the Ready to Crawl and wider children's ministries in your preparation for this occasion. You may like to think about specific decorations or displays, music, video clips etc. that will help to support the significance of this moment for the family and for the corps. While a Dedication ceremony can be held anywhere (e.g., family home, park) it is an ideal opportunity to introduce the family to the wider corps congregation if this is held as part of a regular worship service.

What is a Thanksgiving Ceremony?

While a Dedication ceremony is generally requested by Salvationists or other Christian families, there is an alternative known as the Thanksgiving ceremony. This ceremony is generally used by families in your community who may not want to commit to the full Christian promises made in the Dedication ceremony. You will find notes about the Thanksgiving ceremony in Chapter 3, section 3 of the above-mentioned



ceremonies book. While a Thanksgiving ceremony can be held anywhere (e.g., family home, parklands) it is an ideal opportunity to introduce the family to the wider corps congregation if this is held as part of a regular worship service.

WHY?

Why is this important?

This is a special time for a family as they welcome the precious gift of a child into their lives. If they decide that they want to thank God for this gift and have their child dedicated, it is a real privilege to be invited to be a part of this occasion. This is a time where the family needs help and support as they celebrate this gift and as they look toward the coming years and the child's spiritual development. It is not only support during this special event that is needed but also an opportunity to be a part of a faith community that will help and support the child and family in the long term.

WHO?

Who is involved?

At the meeting(s) with the family it would be ideal if the whole family is present, e.g., older siblings, etc. Although parts of the discussion will be aimed more at the parents/caregivers any other children could be included in suggestions for the ceremony. Some families might like to have Godparents for the child, or you might like to discuss with the family if there are any significant adults, they would like to support them on the day who will continue to support the child and the family beyond the ceremony.

Who is making promises?

Because this is a significant step in the life of their child, it is not only the family who are making promises on the day—the rest of the congregation, family and friends also make a promise to support and encourage the family as well as support the child in their faith development journey.

HOW?

How do we support the parents?

This is a very special time not only for the family involved but also for the corps community. What a wonderful opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for another precious life. As the family take this significant step, it is important to help and support them with a loving and caring faith community. Many will be aware of how overwhelming it can be as a new parent to be charged with the care and nurture of a young life, so any help and support from others can help make it feel like you are not doing it alone.

Support for the parents as they undertake this role is not the only support required—we also need to support the child as he/she begins to grow and develop, and especially as they start to explore what faith might look like for them. Having a bunch of significant adults in their life—who are going to help support their parents in the role of spiritual development—is a crucial thing that can help the child develop a faith that has firm foundations.

How do the parents write their prayer?

Each family will be encouraged to write a prayer expressing their hopes and dreams for their child. It is important for you to help the parents explore what this might look like. This will include talking with the parents about what a dedication is and what it isn't as well as some things they may like to include in the Dedication service.



VISIT WITH THE FAMILY

It is important for you to help the parents to understand that they are the ones primarily responsible for the discipling of their child. Introduce and/or reinforce the key spiritual truths that they would want their child to know and understand before they head off to school:

- We are made by God.
- We are loved by God.
- We can be friends with God always.



Spend some time with the parents/caregivers going through their thoughts and reflections to the questions below (these should have been given to them prior to the meeting so they have had some time to think about their responses).



What are the key questions you might ask the parents? What are the key phrases they might like to include in the prayer or blessing? (You will find some suggestions below of both questions and phrases.)



It would be helpful for them to start by writing down of the key things they would like to include.

- What sort of person do you hope your child will become?
- What are the hopes and dreams you have for your child?
- What do you hope for your child's relationship with Jesus?
- What do you hope your child will discover about God's love for them?
- Who are the people/sorts of people you would want supporting/influencing your child's life?
- What would be your desires and dream for your child, going beyond being healthy and happy?
- I wonder what sorts of experiences you would want your child to know.
- I wonder what sorts of relationships they would be a part of
- I wonder what sorts of things you would like them to be known for (this is more about who they are and characteristics, not about what they do).

On the next page you will see some examples of how to write a prayer or blessing. This is an opportunity to put into words the hopes and dreams they have for their child as they grow and develop. Note that this is not about just taking one of these samples and changing the names—encourage them to put it into their own words and language so that it sounds like it is coming from them. (This is where it is essential that you help parents to talk this through so that they own the key things they would like to say to their child.)

You can download and type your prayer or blessing directly into the frame of the [DearLittleOne_FillablePDF.pdf](http://www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework) (www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework). The PDF will adjust your font size based on the number of characters in the prayer or blessing. It can hold between 200-350 words.



Sample Prayer

Dear God,

We pray that (Sarah) never loses her love for people. That she always shares her wide and beautiful smile to bring peace and joy to others. We pray that she will believe the best of all people and be quick to forgive. We pray for her good health, her kind soul, courage to stand up for what is right and patience to wait for God's plan in her life.

We pray for those people who surround her; that she would:

- know a sense of achievement from good teachers
- experience the fun and care of firm friendships
- learn from the successes and challenges of teams
- grow in the knowledge of God's love through the corps
- and develop in the security of her loving family.

We pray that (Sarah) will always know how much we love her. That she will keep her sense of adventure to travel and experience other cultures. That she will be generous and know the joy of giving to others. That she will have a hunger for learning and a passion for life. Above all, we pray that your Holy Spirit would teach her, your wisdom would guide her, and your love would move her. We pray that everyday (Sarah) will do something that will help her grow in her relationship with you. Amen.

Sample Blessing

Dear (name of child),

Today we thank God for your life and offer this blessing over you as we think about who you are and where you are headed.

Laugh often! Never take yourself or life too seriously and remember that a smile is contagious. We pray that you will have a heart for others, one that is overflowing with love. At times it will get broken, but through those experiences you will also learn and grow.

Dream big! You're never too young to start and you'll never be too old to stop. Take the time to notice the people around you. Please remember that you are never alone, that in your hardest times there are people who love you and will support you. You are valued and loved!

Look around you! See the world through God's eyes, the eyes of the one who created it all and loves you. Never be afraid to question your faith because it's only by doing this that you will gain a deeper relationship with God. We promise, God is big enough to take on all your doubts and fears and will love you through whatever you throw his way.

Pause and listen! Take time to sit and listen to others. Equally important, don't be afraid to open yourself up and let people into your own life; it'll expand your world. We pray you will be yourself, whatever that looks like. Life won't always be easy, and things will happen that you won't understand, but look for God in those situations because we promise he will still be there.

Just love! Love God, love others, and love who you are.

Love and prayers for always,

Mom and Dad



RECORDS

Names of all children should be managed as follows on the Official Rolls and Registers at the corps.

Friends Roll: Infants and Children are tracked on the Friends Roll (one of the five official membership rolls) until their membership changes. Names should be removed from the Friends Roll and added to the Jr Soldier, Sr. Soldier or Adherents roll if/when enrollment takes place. Otherwise names stay on this roll as long as there is affiliation with the corps.

Cradle Roll/Register: All infants/children who are 0 – 5 yrs old should appear on this roll/register (as well as the Friends Roll as mentioned above). The Cradle Roll/Register provides a useful contact list for engaging families in any special infant/toddler events or programming (Nursery, Baby Song, Moms & Tots, etc.). Once infants/children reach their 5th birthday they should be removed from this roll/register and their group memberships should be tracked on other registers depending on their involvement at the corps (Sunday School, Ready To Serve, etc.).

Dedication Register: Infants/children whose parents choose a Dedication or Thanksgiving Ceremony should have their names entered on this register. Names remain on this register as a permanent historical record of all dedications conducted at the corps.

You can find information on the Official Rolls, Rolls and Registers at www.saMissionResource.ca/membership



CEREMONY CHECKLIST

Prepare Ahead

Meet with Parent/s to walk through questions from pages 2 and 3, and the ceremony

Dedication or Thanksgiving Certificate

Encourage Parent/s to write Prayer or Blessing into the “Dear Little One” frame

Salvation Army Media Release Form signed by parent/s

Welcome Certificate

Gift for presentation

Ceremony Participants

Corps Officer

Parents and siblings, Godparents if desired

Flag Sergeant

YPSM and/or Cradle Roll Sergeant or other children and youth worker

Certificate Distribution

Dedication Certificate – available to present to parents who choose the Dedication Ceremony for their child

Thanksgiving Certificate – available to present to parents who choose the Thanksgiving Ceremony for their child

Dedication Certificate (Salvation Army) - available to present to parents who choose the Dedication Ceremony for their child, but wish to have a Salvationist look to the certificate

Welcome Certificate – available to present to parents of all infants/children in the Ready To Crawl, Ready to Explore age groups (0 – 5 years)

RESOURCES

The Canada Bermuda Youth Department is proud to release to you the updated Dedication/Thanksgiving resources which can be ordered through Trade North (Supplies and Purchasing) by:

Phone: 416-422-6100
Email: orderdesk@salvationarmy.ca
Website: store.salvationarmy.ca

For information regarding Dedication/Thanksgiving Ceremonies please refer to pages 8-13 in the Salvation Army Ceremonies book. Remember to include the details of any ceremony in the Dedications Register. There is helpful information about Ready to Crawl/Ready to Play (Cradle Roll/Nursery) Ministry in the [Cradle Roll/Nursery Guidebook.pdf](#). (www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework)

Dedication Certificate (Ready to Crawl)

This certificate may be used for families that wish to make meaningful Christian promises around the raising of their child.



A colorful certificate titled "DEDICATION CERTIFICATE" with a crown graphic. It includes fields for Name, Birth on, Parent/Guardian(s), Officiating Officer, and Corps/Church. A small red shield logo is at the bottom right.

Thanksgiving Certificate (Ready to Crawl)

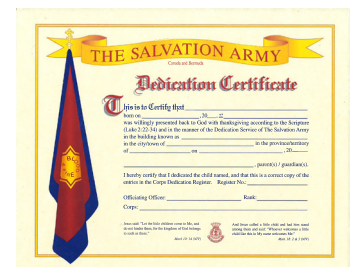
This certificate may be used for families that wish to give thanks to God for the gift of their child.



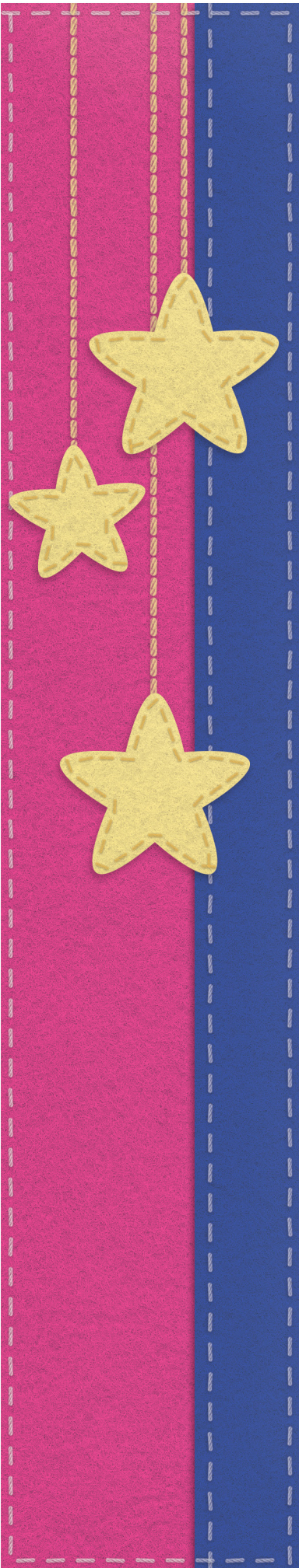
A colorful certificate titled "THANKSGIVING CERTIFICATE" with a banner graphic. It includes fields for Name, Birth on, Parent/Guardian(s), Officiating Officer, and Corps/Church. A small red shield logo is at the bottom right.

Dedication Certificate (Salvation Army)

This certificate may be used for families that wish to make significantly Christian promises around the raising of their child and would like a Salvationist look to their certificate.



A formal certificate titled "THE SALVATION ARMY Dedication Certificate" featuring a flag graphic on the left. It includes fields for Name, Birth on, Parent/Guardian(s), Officiating Officer, and Corps. A small red shield logo is at the bottom right.



Welcome to Ready to Crawl/Ready to Play Ministry Certificate

This certificate welcomes a child into the Ready to Crawl/Play Ministries of the corps/centre. They do not need to have a Dedication ceremony or Thanksgiving ceremony to receive this certificate. For example, these certificates could be given to families who join Baby Song or Moms and Tots.



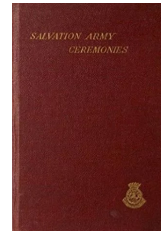
“Dear Little One” Frame (Download)

This frame is designed for use with a personalized prayer or blessing for the child. These could be words of encouragement offered from the parents, the Ready to Crawl Coordinator and/or Corps Officer. See see samples on [page 5](#). A fill-in PDF version of this resource can be downloaded here: [DearLittleOne_FillablePDF.pdf](#) (www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework)



Salvation Army Ceremonies Book

The Salvation Army Ceremonies Book outlines how to lead and what to say during a Dedication or Thanksgiving ceremony and other significant events such as enrollments, marriages and funerals.



Social Media Release Form (Download)

Share this form with parents and receive consent before posting any pictures of their child/family on your social media or website. Download here: www.CANBDAYouth.ca/attheready-framework

THE SALVATION ARMY
MEDIA RELEASE FORM

The Salvation Army strives to ensure that the use of all communication is conducted responsibly, and that the confidentiality of all youth are safeguarded. You will be aware that social media and digital platforms are reaching quickly. We also wish to ensure that our parents provide the digital environment, seeking to regulate it wisely and with integrity for protection of children, communication, and public relations.

I, _____ (Name of Parent / Guardian) hereby give consent for my child to be filmed, interviewed, photographed by the media (social media, print, broadcast) and employees or agents of The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda Territory.

Child / Youth Name: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email Address: _____
Parent / Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____