**Policy and Guidelines for Dedication/Blessing of Children**

General

1. Dedication of children to God, especially the firstborn, was practiced in Old Testament times, e.g., Hannah dedicating Samuel to the Lord. Although the New Testament does not command such a ritual, the way Jesus related to the little ones encourages dedicating children to God.

2. Heretofore, the dedications have been on an ad hoc basis. Whenever the parents of the child were ready, they would make their request. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with this practice, our desire is to be more efficient and effective. The purpose of this writing is to set in place some basic guidelines for accomplishing this task.

**Purpose**

3. The child dedication is not a christening service and should not be appear as such. The dedication is organized to emphasize its three basic purposes:

1. To thank God for the miracle of conception, gestation and birth.
2. To covenant with the parents to raise the child to love and serve the Lord.
3. To bless the child and dedicate it to the Lord.

4. If the pastor is not available, an elder or minister may officiate during the ceremony. However, an elder should not officiate without the local church pastor’s approval.

# Public vs. Private Ceremony

5. In order to support and protect the witness of Shiloh, we reserve the right to publicly dedicate only children born in wedlock of parents who are fully committed to serving the Lord and preferably congregational members. This stance is taken in order to not appear to take parenting lightly or to condone illegitimacy.

6. Parents desiring dedication or blessing of their child should contact the pastor first to discuss the conditions and procedures. The pastor may choose to have a private blessing or prayer for those children of parents who are not congregational members of Shiloh or for children born out of wedlock.

# Time of Year

7. Best practice would dictate that the annual church calendar should include dates when public baby dedications are planned. The recommendation is for at least two per year, preferably a spring and a fall date. Private or in-home blessings may be scheduled subject to the pastor’s availability.

**Conducting the Service**

8. The ceremony will typically be done at the end of the worship service, lasting not more that 5-10 minutes. It should be simple – basically three parts (see attached sample).

* Inviting the parents and child(ren) to come forward during the singing of an appropriate song. Other family members, mentors or “godparents” may also come.
* Scripture and exhortation to the parents.
* Prayer for the child(ren) and parents.

**Additional Procedures**

9. Parents should be congratulated and certificates given. Proper notation should be made for the official church record and a copy of the certificate placed on file.