

Rites on the Way: Approaching Baptism

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Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child

Note

This service is provided for a number of different occasions:

- ¶ the private celebration of a birth or adoption, at home or in church with only family and close friends present;
- ¶ the public celebration of the birth or adoption of a number of children, perhaps in church on a Sunday afternoon;
- ¶ the public celebration of the birth or adoption of a number of children as part of a main Sunday act of worship.

It is designed to meet the needs of:

- ¶ parents who see this as a preliminary to Baptism;
- ¶ parents who do not wish their children to be baptized immediately;
- ¶ others, who do not ask for Baptism, but who recognize that something has happened for which they wish to give thanks to God.

¶ Pastoral Introduction

This may be read by those present before the service begins.

The birth or adoption of a child is a cause for celebration. Many people are overcome by a sense of awe at the creation of new life and want to express their thanks to God. This service provides an opportunity for parents and families to give thanks for the birth or adoption of a child and to pray for family life. It may be a private celebration at home or in hospital, or it may be a public celebration in church, sometimes with a number of children.

This service is not the same as Baptism (sometimes called Christening), which is the sacrament of initiation into membership of the Church, the Body of Christ. If you are interested in exploring the Christian faith, or finding out more about preparation for Baptism, ask the minister taking this service.

Structure

- ¶ Introduction
- ¶ Reading(s) and Sermon
- ¶ Thanksgiving and Blessing
- ¶ Giving of the Gospel
- ¶ Prayers
- ¶ Ending

For Notes, see page 28.

Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child

Introduction

The minister welcomes the people using a liturgical greeting (see page 23) or other suitable words.

A hymn or song may be sung.

The service may be introduced in these or similar words

We are here today to give thanks for *these children*, with *their* family and friends, and to support *their* parents in their responsibilities with prayer and love. God became one of us in Jesus, and understands all that surrounds the arrival and upbringing of children. It is God's purpose that children should know love within the stability of their home, grow in faith, and come at last to the eternal city where his love reigns supreme.

The following may be used

The works of the Lord are great:

All his mercy endures for ever.

Mary gave birth to a child and called him Jesus:

All he will save his people from their sins.

He will be called the Prince of Peace:

All his kingdom will last for ever.

The minister says

Loving God,
you hold all things in life
and call us into your kingdom of peace;
help us to walk the path of your truth
and fill our lives with gratitude and faith,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

Reading(s) and Sermon

A suitable passage from the Bible is read (see page 23).

A sermon may be preached.

A hymn may be sung.

Thanksgiving and Blessing

Where parents wish to recognize the role of supporting friends it may be appropriate for them to stand with the parents at the thanksgiving. One of them may present the children to the minister, and informal words may be said.

The minister says

Do you receive *these children* as a gift from God?

We do.

Do you wish to give thanks to God and seek his blessing?

We do.

The minister says

God our creator,
we thank you for the wonder of new life
and for the mystery of human love.
We thank you for all whose support and skill
surround and sustain the beginning of life.
We thank you that we are known to you by name
and loved by you from all eternity.
We thank you for Jesus Christ,
who has opened to us the way of love.
We praise you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

All Blessed be God for ever.

The minister may say for each child

What name have you given this child?

A parent or supporting friend replies

His/her name is N.

The minister may take the child.

The minister says

As Jesus took children in his arms and blessed them,
so now we ask God's blessing on *N*.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for *his/her* birth;
surround *him/her* with your blessing
that *he/she* may know your love,
be protected from evil,
and know your goodness all *his/her* days.

When all the children have been prayed for

All **May they learn to love all that is true,
grow in wisdom and strength
and, in due time, come through faith and baptism
to the fullness of your grace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

The minister prays for the parents

May God the Father of all bless *these parents*
and give *them* grace to love and care for *their children*.
May God give *them* wisdom, patience and faith,
help *them* to provide for the *children's* needs
and, by *their* example,
reveal the love and truth that are in Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

Giving of the Gospel

A copy of a Gospel is presented, with these words

Receive this book.
It is the good news of God's love.
Take it as your guide.

The minister may address the supporting friends and say

Will you do all that you can to help and support *N and N* in the
bringing up of *N*?
With the help of God, we will.

The minister may address the wider family and friends and say

Will you do all that you can to help and support *this family*?
With the help of God, we will.

This prayer may be said by the parents or by the whole congregation

All **God our creator,
we thank you for the gift of these children,
entrusted to our care.
May we be patient and understanding,
ready to guide and to forgive,
so that through our love
they may come to know your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

*The minister may say additional prayers (see pages 24–27),
ending with the Lord's Prayer.*

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
and so in faith and trust we say

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

(or)

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
and so we have the courage to say

All **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Ending

The minister says one of these or another suitable blessing

The love of the Lord Jesus
draw *you* to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen *you* in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill *your* hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *you* and remain with *you* always.

All **Amen.**

(or)

The Lord bless *you* and watch over *you*,
the Lord make his face shine upon *you*
and be gracious to *you*,
the Lord look kindly on *you* and give *you* peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *you* and remain with *you* always.

All **Amen.**

Supplementary Texts

Liturgical Greetings

In the name of Jesus
who was born to be our Saviour, Christ the Lord,
we welcome you.

Grace, mercy and peace be with you
and also with you.

All

(or)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you

and also with you.

All

(or)

The Lord be with you

and also with you.

All

Bible Readings

One of these, or another suitable passage from the Bible, is read.

Exodus 20.12

Isaiah 9.2,6-7

Psalms 20

Psalms 128

Psalms 139.7-18

Matthew 1.18-25

Matthew 7.24-27

Matthew 18.1-5

Matthew 18.10-14

Mark 10.13-16

Luke 1.39-45

Luke 2.22-24

Luke 2.33-40

John 1.9-14

Ephesians 3.14-21

Ephesians 6.1-4

1 John 2.12-14

Additional Prayers

Additional prayers may include the following or other suitable prayers.

1 For the child/children

God our Father,
we pray for *this child*
that in due time
he/she may be received by baptism
into the family of your Church,
and become *an inheritor* of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For the home and family

2 Heavenly Father,
whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth
the life of an earthly home:
bless the home of *this child*,
and help all the family to live together in your love.
Teach them to serve you and each other,
and make them always ready to show your love
to those in need;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

3 Father in heaven, bless these parents,
that they may cherish their *child*;
make them wise and understanding,
to help *him/her* as *he/she* grows,
and surround this family
with the light of your truth
and the warmth of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

4 God our Father, we pray to you
for all who have the care of *this child*.
Guide them with your Holy Spirit,
that they may bring *him/her* up
in the ways of truth and love.
Through their care enable *him/her* to grow in grace
and become daily more like your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

5 For the father

Heavenly Father,
you entrusted your Son Jesus,
the child of Mary,
to the care of Joseph, an earthly father.
Bless *N* [*this man*]
as he cares for his family.
Give him strength and wisdom,
tenderness and patience;
support him in the work he has to do,
protecting those who look to him,
as we look to you for love and salvation,
through Jesus Christ our rock and defender.

All **Amen.**

6 For grandparents and other relatives

Father God, from whom every family
in earth and heaven is named,
we thank you for the rich variety
of the families you have created for us,
and for the relationships
which we see and enjoy within them.
Help us to respect and learn from each other,
that we may come to maturity
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All **Amen.**

7 For brothers and sisters

Living God,
we pray for *N's brothers and sisters*
and for all whose lives will be changed by *his/her* arrival;
grant them friendship and love
that their home may be an image of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

8 After a difficult birth

Loving Father,
you have turned pain into joy
by the birth of *N [this child]*.
May *N [this mother]*,
remembering no longer her anguish,
trust you in all things.
As she asks for all she would receive,
may she discover that in you her joy is complete;
through Jesus your Son.

All **Amen.**

9 For health workers

Father almighty, we give you thanks
for all concerned with the care of *N [this mother]*
and the safe birth of *N [her child]*.
We pray for the doctors and nurses,
midwives and health visitors,
and all who will support the health and welfare of this family
in the coming years.
May they be filled with your love,
moved by your compassion
and supported by your presence.
We ask this in Jesus' name.

All **Amen.**

10 When a child is adopted

O God of love,
you have made us your children by adoption and grace;
as *N* becomes a member of this family
bind them together by your grace,
and give them wisdom, joy and faith,
that together they may grow into your love
and serve your purposes of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

11 For the birth parents of an adopted child

Heavenly Father, rich in goodness and mercy,
look with your love on *N's* natural father and mother.
Keep them in your good care
and grant them peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

12 When a child has special needs

Living God, creator of us all,
we thank you for entrusting *N*
into the special care of *N and N*.
Give them and all who surround them
wisdom and understanding, courage and patience;
give them grace to put aside fear and anxiety
and to fulfil your purposes;
fill their hearts with your unfailing love,
that *N* may grow up secure in giving and receiving love
and in the enjoyment of your presence,
to enrich our lives and the lives of others
in ways beyond our imagining,
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Notes

- 1 To make it clear that the service is one of thanksgiving and not a Baptism, a register shall be kept recording the names of children for whom this thanksgiving service has been conducted, and the family should be given a certificate.
- 2 The service should be adapted when only one parent is present or to suit particular needs.
- 3 When several children (from one or more families) have been brought for thanksgiving and blessing, the prayer on page 19 may be said for each child or for each family or for all the children, as is most appropriate. The names of the parents and of the child may be used in the prayer for the parents on page 20.
- 4 Provision is made on page 19 of the service for supporting friends or relatives to make a commitment to the child and the family. It may be appropriate for them to stand with the family at the thanksgiving. One of them may present the child to the minister, and informal words may be said.
- 5 Hymns, songs or carols may be sung at points other than those indicated. If occasion requires, the sermon may be omitted.

Rites Supporting Disciples on the Way of Christ

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Notes

1 Godparents and Sponsors

The term 'godparent' is used for those asked to present children for baptism and to continue to support them. The term 'sponsor' is used for those who agree to offer support to candidates of any age for baptism, confirmation or affirmation of baptismal faith on their journey of faith. It is not necessary that a new disciple have the same person as godparent and sponsor. At the Welcome, the new disciple should agree with the minister on a member of the church to be their companion and supporter, and to act as their sponsor. A prayer is provided for the commissioning of godparents and sponsors within the Welcome of Those Preparing for the Baptism of Children (page 32) and the Welcome of Disciples on the Way of Faith (page 34).

2 Testimony

The giving of a personal testimony in these rites or in an initiation service is to be encouraged. It is a public opportunity both for the new disciples to express their faith and for the Christian community to be encouraged and enthused to continue to spread the good news of God's kingdom. Such testimony will affirm the mission of the Church and allow the congregation to learn from the experience of the new disciples. It is important that testimony should be appropriate in length and style and not detract from the rest of the service. If a public act of testimony is not appropriate, a testimony may be given in written form.

3 Giving of Gifts

It may be appropriate, particularly at the Welcome (pages 33–35) and the Thanksgiving for Holy Baptism (pages 184–187), to give the new disciple a gift to express the welcome and support of the church community. Depending on the recipient and the nature of the church community, a book, for example a prayer book, may be appropriate. However, in some communities a picture or icon, a cross, carving or sculpture or some other symbol of Christian faith may be a more suitable encouragement for the new disciple.

4 The Giving of the Gospel and the Bible

The giving of a book of Scripture at services of commitment is encouraged. It is suggested that a Gospel is given at the Welcome of Those Preparing for the Baptism of Children (pages 31–32), if one has not already been given at a Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child. A Gospel may also be given at the Call (pages 37–39), when it is expected that a new disciple will engage with the Bible, and particularly the life of Jesus, in church, in the group and in personal devotions. It may be appropriate to give a Bible at the Call, or leave the presentation of a Bible to the service of initiation, or to the Thanksgiving for Holy Baptism (pages 184–187), when the disciple moves into a new relationship with Christ and the Church.

¶ Welcome of Those Preparing for the Baptism of Children

Note

This rite may be used during baptism preparation, or as part of the Sunday service when the child is first brought to church. If it is to be used within a celebration of Holy Communion, it may be used before the prayers of intercession, at the peace, or before the dismissal. It may also be appropriate to invite godparents and sponsors to be present; they may be commissioned during this rite. If a Gospel has not been given at a service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child (pages 16–28) it may be appropriate to give one on this occasion.

Welcome

The minister may address the congregation

Today we welcome *N and N, and N and N*, who are preparing for the baptism of their *children N and N*. As the people of God in this place, will you welcome *these children* and support *their families* by your prayers and fellowship as they prepare for *their children's* baptism?

All **With the help of God, we will.**

A large candle is lit.

The minister may ask the parents, godparents and sponsors to come forward with their children and says, in these or other suitable words

We thank God for his presence in your lives and for the grace that has brought you here today.

Baptism is the sign of new life in Christ. You share with us the responsibility for encouraging *these children* in the new life that Jesus Christ offers to us all. Will you pray for *these children*, and help *them* to grow in the knowledge and love of God and to take *their* place in the life and worship of the Church?

With the help of God, we will.

The minister says

Eternal and loving God,
you have promised that those who seek will find you;
we pray for your blessing on *these families*
as they prepare for the baptism of *N and N*,
that they may walk together in the Way of Christ.
By your grace, may *N and N* become your *children*
and take *their* place within the community of your Church,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The minister may introduce and commission the godparents and sponsors using these or other suitable words

N and N, you have been asked to nurture *these children* as they grow in faith.

May God bring you joy as you hold *them* in his love,
and walk with *them* on the Way of Christ.

May you be a blessing to one another,
and may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

¶ Welcome of Disciples on the Way of Faith

Notes

- 1 This rite is intended for those who, after an initial exploration of the Christian faith, wish to learn the Christian Way within the life of the people of God. It is not intended for initial enquirers, but for those who want to commit themselves to continuing the journey of faith. One or more members of the Church should be invited to be the companion(s) of each new disciple, and to act as their sponsors. Those sponsors may be commissioned during this rite.
- 2 The Welcome should be included in an act of public worship, and may be used before the collect, after the sermon or before the peace. The rite might begin outside the church building or at the church door, where the new disciples are welcomed by the Christian community, and particularly by their sponsors, and accompanied into the church in procession.
- 3 It may be appropriate to give the new disciple a gift to express the welcome and support of the church community (see Note 3 on page 30).

Welcome

The minister may introduce the Welcome in these or similar words

Today it is our joy and privilege to welcome *N and N* as *disciples* on the Way of Christ. *They* are among us as a sign of the journey of faith to which we are all called.

The minister invites the disciples to stand before the people with their sponsors. The sponsors introduce them, and the minister says

We thank God for his presence in your *lives*
and for the grace that has brought you here today.
We welcome you.

What is it that you seek?

The disciples may reply in their own words, or may say

To learn the Way of Christ.

The minister addresses the congregation

We welcome *N and N*
in the love and hope of Christ.
Will you support and pray for *them*,
and learn with *them* the Way of Christ?

All With the help of God, we will.

The minister may introduce the sponsors and address them using these or other suitable words

Will you accompany *N and N* on the journey of faith,
supporting *them* with friendship, love and prayer?
With the help of God, we will.

The minister may commission the sponsors using these or other suitable words

May God give you the gift of love
to serve *N and N* whom he loved first.
May God give you the gift of faith
to share the good news of his kingdom.
May God give you the gift of joy
as you journey together with Jesus our Lord.
And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

The minister then addresses each candidate separately or the group together

Will you receive the sign of the cross,
as a mark of Christ's love for you as you explore his Way?
I will.

The minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each candidate. The sponsors may be invited to sign the candidates with the cross. The minister says

Receive the sign of the cross.
May Christ our Redeemer,
who claims you for his own,
deliver you from evil and guide you on the Way.

Where a candidate is already baptized, the minister uses these words

Receive the sign of the cross.
May Christ our Redeemer,
who in your baptism claimed you for his own,
protect and guide you.

Prayer may be offered for each new disciple. After all have been prayed with, the minister says this or a similar prayer. It may be said over each disciple or the whole group.

God of life,
you give us the gift of faith.
Guide *N and N* by your wisdom
and surround *them* with your love.
Deepen *their* knowledge of Christ
and set *their* feet on the Way that leads to life.
May your people uphold *them* in love,
find in *them* a sign of hope,
and learn with *them* the Way of Christ.

All Amen.

A gift expressing welcome to the new disciple from the congregation may be given.

¶ Affirmation of the Christian Way

Note

This may be used in public worship when special significance is being given to the presence of disciples on the Way, for example at the Welcome or the Call. It may also be suitable in informal settings as an introduction or reminder about the shape of the Way. Where appropriate, it may be led by two or three people.

Affirmation of the Christian Way

As we follow the Way of Christ,
we affirm the presence of God among us,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

God calls us to share in worship.

*Jesus said, where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.*

All Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share in prayer.

Jesus said, remain in me, and I will remain in you.

All Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share the Scriptures.

*Jesus met his disciples on the road
and opened the Scriptures to them.*

All Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share in communion.

Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me.

All Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share in service.

Jesus said, as you do it for the least of these, you do it for me.

All Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

God calls us to share the good news.

Jesus said, go and make disciples of all nations.

All Jesus, you are the Way: guide us on our journey.

¶ Call and Celebration of the Decision to be Baptized or Confirmed or to Affirm Baptismal Faith

Notes

- 1 The Call is intended for those who wish to continue on the Way, following a period of exploration and regular involvement in the Christian community.
- 2 The Call should be included in an act of public worship, and may be used before the collect, after the sermon or before the peace.
- 3 At the Signing with the Cross, a priest may anoint the candidate with pure olive oil, reflecting the practice of athletes preparing for a contest. It is appropriate that the oil should be that consecrated by the bishop for Signing with the Cross. If oil is used, care should be taken that the candidates understand the symbolism and significance of anointing (see pages 345–346). When a candidate for baptism is anointed during the Call, oil is not used for the Signing with the Cross in Baptism; however, oil mixed with fragrant spices (traditionally called chrism), expressing the blessings of the messianic era and the richness of the Holy Spirit, is used to accompany the prayer after the baptism, if it is not to be used at confirmation.
- 4 Where a disciple has already been baptized, the second form is used at the Signing with the Cross.

Call and Celebration

The minister may introduce the Call in these or similar words

Today it is our joy and privilege to welcome *N* and *N*, disciples with us on the Way of Christ. They are among us as a sign of the journey of faith to which we are all called.

The minister invites the disciples to stand before the people with their sponsors. The disciples are presented to the congregation by their sponsors, and some words of personal commendation may be said. The minister says

We thank God for his presence in your lives and for the grace that has brought you here today.

What is it that you seek?

The disciples may reply in their own words, or may say

To follow the Way of Christ.

The minister may ask the sponsors to confirm the candidates' commitment to worship, prayer and the fellowship of the Church, and their readiness to study and to understand their story as part of the people of God. The names of those who seek initiation may be added to a book dedicated for that purpose.

The minister then addresses each candidate separately or the group together

Will you receive the sign of the cross as a mark of Christ's love for you as you explore his Way?
I will.

The minister makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of each candidate. The sponsors may be invited to sign the candidates with the cross. The minister says

Receive the sign of the cross.
May Christ our Redeemer,
who claims you for his own,
deliver you from evil and guide you on the Way.

Where a candidate is already baptized, the minister uses these words

Receive the sign of the cross.
May Christ our Redeemer,
who in your baptism claimed you for his own,
protect and guide you.

A copy of a Gospel is presented, with these words

Receive this book.
It is the good news of God's love.
Take it as your guide.

The candidates remain in front of the congregation for the prayers of intercession. This or other similar forms may be used (see pages 53–55).

N and *N*, who are our brothers and sisters, have already travelled a long road. We rejoice with *them* in the gentle guidance of God. Let us pray that *they* may press onwards, until *they* come to share fully in the Way of Christ.

May God the Father reveal his Christ to *them* more and more with every passing day.
Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

May *they* undertake with generous hearts and souls whatever God may ask of *them*.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

May *they* have our sincere and unfailing support every step of the way.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

May *their* hearts and ours become more responsive to the needs of others.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

In due time may *they* come to baptism / to confirmation / to reaffirm *their* baptismal faith, and receive the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Note

In order to give shape to their discipleship, all baptized Christians should be encouraged to explore these four texts and make them their own: the Summary of the Law, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Beatitudes. The texts may be presented on cards or found in personal Bibles, either within a study group or in public worship, possibly after the sermon.

Jesus' Summary of the Law

One of the following or other readings may be used

Exodus 20.1-19; Leviticus 19.9-18; Romans 8.1-4; Romans 13.8-10; Galatians 5.13,14; Mark 12.28-34

One of the following psalms may be used

Psalm 1; 15; 119.9-16; 119.97-104

The minister addresses those who are disciples on the Way of faith

Brothers and sisters, listen carefully to the words that Jesus gave us as a summary of the law. These few words help us understand how we are to live as human beings in God's world. They are given not to condemn us but to show how by the grace of God we may live as free people reflecting the goodness and love of God.

The Summary of the Law is read

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

God of truth,

help us to keep your law of love
and to walk in ways of wisdom,
that we may find true life
in Jesus Christ your Son.

All **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

One of the following or other readings may be used

I Kings 8.27-30; Hosea 11.1-4; Romans 8.14-17, 26, 27;
Galatians 4.4-7; Matthew 6.7-13; Luke 11.1-4

One of the following psalms may be used

Psalm 23; 103.6-18

The minister addresses those who are disciples on the Way of faith

Brothers and sisters, listen carefully to the Lord's Prayer. It is given to us as a pattern for our praying as well as a prayer that we can make our own. It teaches us that heaven is open to our prayers and that the world is open to the gracious working of God.

The Lord's Prayer is read in the form which is commonly used by the congregation.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

(or)

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

The minister says

Lord of heaven and earth,
as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer,
give us patience and courage never to lose hope,
but always to bring our prayers before you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Apostles' Creed

One of the following or other readings may be used

Deuteronomy 6.1-7; Deuteronomy 26.1-10; Romans 10.8-13;
1 Timothy 6.11-16; 2 Timothy 1.8-14; Matthew 16.13-18;
John 12.44-50

One of the following psalms may be used

Psalm 78.1-7; 145.1-9

The minister addresses those who are disciples on the Way of faith

Brothers and sisters, listen carefully to this declaration of faith, which the Church calls the Apostles' Creed. Christians have said this together since the earliest centuries, especially at baptism, where we confess that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour. It speaks of our belief in God's love for the world, in creation, in incarnation and in salvation.

The Apostles' Creed is read

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

The minister says

Holy God,
faithful and unchanging:
enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Beatitudes – Blessings of the Gospel

One of the following or other readings may be used

Isaiah 2.2-4; Isaiah 11.1-10; Ephesians 3.7-13; 2 Corinthians 8.9;
1 John 3.1-3; Revelation 21.22-27; Mark 4.30-32

One of the following psalms may be used

Psalm 72.1-14; 87; 122

The minister addresses those who are disciples on the Way of faith

Brothers and sisters, listen carefully to these words from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In them he declares the blessings of God's kingdom. He gives us a vision of a world redeemed by love, and the qualities of discipleship which will bring about that transformation.

The Beatitudes are read from either Matthew 5.3-10 or Luke 6.20-23

Matthew 5.3-10

Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who suffer persecution for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(or)

Luke 6.20-23

Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude you, revile you,
and defame you on account of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,
for surely your reward is great in heaven;
for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

The minister says

Almighty God,
you search us and know us:
may we rely on you in strength
and rest on you in weakness,
now and in all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

¶ Prayers in Preparation for Baptism

Note

These prayers may be used as part of baptism preparation, within a study group, or on the evening before the baptism either at home or in church.

Prayers in Preparation for Baptism

Candles may be lit.

Blessed are you, sovereign God of all;
you lead us from death to life.
In baptism you create a new people,
cleansing us from sin,
consecrating us to service,
and transferring us from the dominion of darkness
into the kingdom of your beloved Son,
where with all your people, we may know your grace
and proclaim your unchanging glory.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Blessed be God for ever.

Two or three short readings may be read, interspersed with silence or appropriate music. The readings may be drawn from those of the season or may reflect the particular circumstances of the candidates and their families. Other possible readings include

Matthew 3.13–4.2; Mark 1.1–8; John 3.1–6; Romans 6.3–5;
Romans 8.14–17; Colossians 1.9–14; Colossians 3.1–14; 1 Peter 1.3–9

A period of reflection and prayer follows.

The Lord who called us has called us by name.

All Father of all, renew us and bring us life.

The Lord who formed us has also redeemed us.

All Jesus, light of the world, love us and bring us life.

When we pass through fire and water, the Lord will be with us.

All Spirit of God, lead us and bring us life.

We shall not be overwhelmed,
for the Lord God is our saviour.

All Creator, redeemer, sustainer, bring us life. Amen.

(or)

Lord God, in the beginning you called forth light
to dispel the darkness that lay upon the face of the deep.
Deliver your servants from the powers of evil
and enlighten us with your presence,
that with open eyes and glad hearts
we may worship you and serve you,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

Lord Christ, true light of the world,
shine, we pray, in the hearts of your people,
that we might see the Way that leads to eternal life,
and follow without stumbling;
for you are the Way, O Christ,
as you are the Truth and the Life.

All Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, come;
come as wind, come as fire.
Convict, convert and consecrate our hearts and minds,
to our great good, and to your great glory;
who with the Father and the Son are one God,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

The people may be invited to add their own prayers.

The Lord's Prayer is said (see page 94).

The prayers conclude with

Gracious God,
whose faithfulness never fails,
may those who seek find the kingdom,
those who knock see an opened door,
those who ask receive the gift of new life
which you offer freely to all
in Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Resources

Being welcomed as a disciple begins a journey of exploration of the Christian Way; central to that journey is regular reflection in a group that explores different aspects of Christianity. The disciple may meet with a group during the week, perhaps following a course, or a group may leave the regular congregation during the normal service before the sermon. It is important that the congregation prays regularly for those exploring the Christian Way and is encouraged to see them as models of Christian learning.

New disciples should be helped and encouraged into a daily, sustaining discipline of prayer and reflection on Scripture. Therefore, it may be appropriate for a regular group to use Prayer during the Day or Morning or Evening Prayer from *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*. At the appropriate time either might include the Presentation of the Four Texts (pages 41–47).

¶ Traditional Prayers for Use with Learning Groups

These traditional prayers are taken from Prayer During the Day.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. *from St Patrick's Breastplate*

Eternal God,
the light of the minds that know you,
the joy of the hearts that love you,
and the strength of the wills that serve you:
grant us so to know you
that we may truly love you,
so to love you that we may truly serve you,
whose service is perfect freedom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *after Augustine of Hippo (430)*

Eternal light, shine into our hearts,
eternal goodness, deliver us from evil,
eternal power, be our support,
eternal wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,
eternal pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength
we may seek your face and be brought by your infinite mercy
to your holy presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Alcuin of York (804)*

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing. *Sarum Primer*

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you
for all the benefits you have won for us,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for us.
Most merciful redeemer,
friend and brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day. *after Richard of Chichester (1253)*

O gracious and holy Father,
give us wisdom to perceive you,
diligence to seek you,
patience to wait for you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you,
and a life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit
of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Benedict of Nursia (c. 550)*

O Lord our God,
grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart;
that so desiring, we may seek and find you;
and so finding, may love you;
and so loving, may hate those sins from which
you have delivered us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Anselm (1109)*

A prayer before Bible reading

O Lord, you have given us your word
for a light to shine upon our path.
Grant us so to meditate on that word,
and to follow its teaching,
that we may find in it the light
that shines more and more until the perfect day;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *after Jerome (420)*

Prayers of Intercession

In the power of the Spirit let us pray to the Father,
through Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We pray for all who follow the Way of Christ
and for the unity of all Christian people;
break down that which separates us from one another and from you,
that knowing your forgiveness we may share your love
with a needy world.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for those who hold positions of responsibility and power
both internationally and in our local communities;
may your Holy Spirit guide them in their decision-making,
so that paths of truth and justice may be open to everyone.
Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We give you thanks and pray
for all who support and care for us as we follow the Way of Christ,
our families and friends,
and our fellow pilgrims along the way;
nourish us all with the words of life and the bread of heaven,
that we may worship you joyfully,
listen to you willingly
and serve you gladly.
Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We pray for those who,
through sickness, misfortune or abuse,
feel that their lives are without meaning or direction;
surround them with your love,
and give wisdom and patience to all who support and guide them.
Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We thank you for the fullness of life you give us in Jesus Christ,
and for all whose lives have been an example of your truth
and life for us;

may our communion with them, and with all the saints,
nourish and support us on our earthly pilgrimage.
Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

(or)

Surround with your love those exploring the Way of Christ
and set their feet on the way that leads to life.

May your people learn with them the Way of Christ
and find in them a sign of hope.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Guide with your wisdom
those who have heard the call to seek the way of life
and deepen their knowledge and love of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Give your grace to those whom we have welcomed
as learners in the Way of Christ
and grant them the wisdom that leads to life in Christ.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Support with your grace and protection
all who have set themselves to learn the Way of Christ,
that they may know your love
and be a source of life to others.

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

(or)

God of all time and space, one God in Trinity,
turn your ear to hear us as we pray.

Hear us, Lord.

All Hear us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

Guiding Israel with fire and cloud,
you led your chosen people from captivity to the promised land.
We pray for guidance as we search out the Way,
and wisdom for those struggling to find it.
Guide us, Lord.

All Guide us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

Revealed in burning bush and in mountain cloud,
you gave the law, and taught your people.

We ask that, learning from the Scriptures,
we may grow in love for you and for one another.

Teach us, Lord.

All Teach us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

Father, you sent your Son in human frailty;
in the garden, he accepted the cup of death.

We pray for strength to meet the challenges before us,
and remember those who have inspired your Church to faith ...
Strengthen us, Lord.

All Strengthen us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

Jesus, healer of the sick,
worker of miracles, friend of the outcast;
we ask for grace to care
for our neighbours throughout the world;
especially we pray for ...

Sustain us, Lord.

All Sustain us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

Holy Spirit, living breath of living God,
you inspired the apostles to preach good news.
Help us to bear witness to your love
with cheerful hearts and constant courage.
Inspire us, Lord.

All Inspire us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

Loving Father of all creation,
loving Saviour in form of a servant,
loving Spirit, present among us,
God of all time and space, one God in Trinity,
we offer up our prayers to you.
Hear us, Lord.

All Hear us, Lord, and all your pilgrim Church.

¶ *At the Preparation of the Table*

Adults, young people and children may bring forward the gifts and help with the preparation of the table. They then lead the congregation in the prayer at the preparation of the table.

All With this bread that we bring
we shall remember Jesus.

All With this wine that we bring
we shall remember Jesus.

Bread for his body,
wine for his blood,
gifts from God to his table we bring.

All **We shall remember Jesus.**

¶ *At the Dismissal*

Adults, young people and children may lead the following

To a troubled world
peace from Christ.
To a searching world
love from Christ.
To a waiting world
hope from Christ.

¶ *At the Giving of a Bible*

Receive this Bible.
Hear God's word with us.
Learn and tell its stories.
Rejoice in its good news.
Discover its mysteries.
Honour its commandments.
May God's life-giving word be sweeter to you than honey
and lead you in the Way of Christ.