

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 212.

Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child

Introduction

The minister welcomes the people using a liturgical greeting (see page 207) 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 207).

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.

Prayers

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 208–211),
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

All **and also with you.**

(or)

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

All **and also with you.**

(or)

The Lord be with you

All **and also with you.**

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 203 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 204.
- 4** Provision is made on page 203 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.