

# A Service for Infant Baptism

## Rejoice

*People*      *for God is among us.*

## Give thanks

*People*      *for in Christ we are a new people.*

## Celebrate

*People*      *for the Spirit has set us free.*

## Be one

*People*      *for there are no more distinctions between  
Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and  
female and all are one in Christ Jesus.*

## Statement of Purpose

We have gathered today for the baptism of      C.... .

People brought their children to Jesus, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw it he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.'

## **Hymn**

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, who makes all things new, you have claimed us as your people and owned us as your family. Help us now to know your presence in all that we do together this evening. Source of all life, as we give thanks for this new life in our midst and celebrate the wonder that is a baby, help us to know that you are celebrating and smiling with us. Christ Jesus, born a vulnerable infant in a stable, help us tonight to see you afresh in C and in each other. Holy Spirit, with your empowering energy, transform our symbols, our actions and our words and make them yours. Trinity of love, inspire us and make us one with you and with each other.

**Amen**

### **Statement Concerning Baptism**

By the time of Jesus' ministry the rite of baptism was attracting many Jews. His baptismal rite followed repentance for past sins, and was an external cleansing of the body after an internal clean out of sin from a person's past life. It marked a turning toward God, a new beginning and a new life. Jesus presented himself for baptism at the beginning of his ministry, and the gospel story describes God's Spirit descending on Jesus and a voice from heaven proclaiming him to be 'the beloved'. After his resurrection, Jesus charged his disciples to make disciples of all nations, to baptise men and women everywhere and teach them all that he had commanded. For the early church, being immersed in water and coming up again became a symbolic re-enactment of Christ's death and resurrection. Our sprinkling of water today has the same significance. Baptism is a token of God's love. Baptism stands for the new kind of living God has given us through Jesus. Baptism marks our entering into the care and teaching of Christ's Church. Through baptism the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ.

## Hymn

### Vows for Parents

**Minister** N and N, you have brought your child for baptism,  
do you confess again your faith in one God –  
who is the depth and ground of our being  
who is the liberating and reconciling Christ  
who is the Spirit of truth and life?

**Parents** **We do.**

**Minister** Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”.

N and N, do you promise  
to share with C the good news of the Kingdom  
to nurture her/him with your Christian faith  
to demonstrate for her/him a loving response  
to human need  
to show her/him justice and a will to transform injustice  
to lead her/him to love and safeguard the earth and all creation?

**Parents** **We do.**

**Minister** Jesus said to Jerusalem, “How I have longed to gather your children as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings”.

N and N, by the grace of God  
do you promise –  
to introduce C to the love of Christ by the example of your love,  
to help her/him to grow in the faith of the church,  
and with her/him honestly to explore that faith.

**Parents** **We do.**

## Vows for Godparents

**Minister** Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life”.

M and M, you have been appointed godparents to C,

will you befriend and support C in her/his life’s journey?

Will you encourage and counsel her/him in his search for truth?

Will you keep a special place for her/him in your lives as (s)he builds her/his own?

**Godparents We will.**

**Minister** Jesus said, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall never enter it”.

M and M, will you help C in her/his growing up to care about justice,

to value peace,

to honour reconciliation

and to open her/his heart to all the possibilities of love?

**Godparents We will.**

**Minister** Jesus said, “I have come so that you may have life, and have it in all its fullness”.

M and M, will you play your part in C ‘s life, helping her/him to discern what has worth and depth and beauty?

Will you foster in her/him warmth, humour, love of family, sensitivity to the world, and compassion for its people?

**Godparents We will.**

## **Vows for Congregation**

**Minister** In the letter to Titus we read:– ‘It was for no reason except his own compassion that God saved us, by means of the cleansing water of rebirth and by renewing us with the Holy Spirit which he has so generously poured over us through Jesus Christ our Saviour’.

We, as a Congregation gathered here this day, also have our part to play in N’s Christian upbringing, and so I ask you to stand now as a sign of your commitment to.

And I ask you –

As a community of faith, witnessing and celebrating this sacrament, do you promise your love, support and care for C in your future with her/him?

**People** **We do**

**Minister** And do you promise to share with her/him what you yourselves have received, the gift of God’s love revealed in Christ, a desire to grow in the way of Christ in all your life, and to serve him in the world?

**People** **We do**

**Baptism**

C, I baptise you in the name the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

## **The Sung Blessing**

The Lord bless you, and keep you:–  
The Lord make his face to shine upon you,  
And be gracious unto you  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you,  
And give you peace.

## **Declaration**

I declare that C has been received into the church by baptism. Jesus said, “Whoever receives one such child in my name, receives me”.

## **Hymn**

### **A Word for the Occasion**

*[The following is an exemplar of what might be said.]*

This occasion demands a Word, but sermonising seems kind of heavy. Others might offer wise counsel on parenting at this time, but I have no expertise to offer in this field. So I’m not preaching to the congregation or lecturing on parenting, instead, this is an open letter to Ryan.

Dear Ryan,

Tonight you were baptised. What have we done to you, son? In one sense we haven’t done much at all. Some might say we’ve made you a Christian, others might say we’ve washed away your ‘original sin’ and others think its about giving you a name. It’s nothing like as simple.

When my younger son was about twelve, he came back from a Scripture Union Camp and said, “Dad, they were trying to make me a Christian, but I wasn’t having any of that”. He was quite right. Other people don’t make you a Christian. That’s your choice. Your options are all still open and the choices are still all yours. You will decide who you will be.

We haven’t washed away all your ‘original sin’ either. When you’re a baby it’s quite useful still to have your original sin – it’s called self-centredness. It makes you holler your needs to the world. It’s an invaluable tool in the training of your parents to feed you, change you, comfort you – and they need to know when they’ve earned your displeasure. It’s not so acceptable when you cease to be a baby. It can spoil relationships and you’ll need to work your way through it yourself, but you’ll know you’re getting somewhere when you can hear the world hollering its needs to you, and you care.

We didn't give you your name tonight either. Your parents chose your name for you before you were born and they invested it with their hopes for you and their love. You will give that name character and personality and substance over many years, and in doing so, you will make it your own. We made a thing about your name tonight – your Christian name – because it's a way of saying you count, you matter, and you are a person. Folk have gathered from strange corners of the universe like England, Greenock, the U.S and East Kilbride not to give you your name, but to acknowledge, "Ryan Allen, you are important to us all.

So if we haven't made you a Christian, or washed away your sins or given you a name, what have we done? We've welcomed you into the Church, which often is not inspiring, but which still counts as a lot more than the best source of home-baking in the world. It's a band of folk with branches all over, who believe in justice and peace and love. People who are ordinary and know it, but who believe that there is a God of love who is the source of life, who does extraordinary things through ordinary folk. People who have discovered the teaching and example of Jesus and believe that he demonstrated the love of God in his life and death, and who believe he opened up a new kind of life for the whole of creation.

So you'll be mixing with some weird folk, but there's no extra charge for that.

This may be a sensitive subject for you just now, Ryan, but some have referred to baptism as a re-birth. At the moment you probably remember your first birth as not a bundle of laughs, and when that memory fades you can always ask your Mum. But let it be a warning as well. Life is not always sweet and painless, and some would say that if you choose to become a follower of Christ it can sensitise you even more to the suffering of the world. We hope that this baptism thing we have done tonight will not be too great a burden to you. We hope it will help you to encounter the God who has a soft spot for the poor, the gentle, the mourners, the hungry, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers.

Life is not fair and society is not just and humankind has a remarkable capacity for cruelty. This church thing, however, believes in a God who is with the suffering, a God who did glorious things as a vulnerable infant, a God who transforms suffering itself and who turned death on a cross into a victory. We have said you are accepted in Christ's church. We have opened the door and hung out the 'Welcome' sign. In your time you will make your choices.

In the meantime, Ryan, take a word of advice from someone who practices it. Don't be in too much of a hurry to grow up. Pace yourself. I believe God wants you to take time to smell the flowers, to walk the hills and swim in the sea. I believe God wants you to explore your cultural birthright, to boogie and ceilidh and grow poetry in your soul, to support Motherwell FC, and in time to savour malt whiskies.

Sláinte Mhath!

*Your adoptive Uncle*

### **Prayer**

God of grace and life, we thank you for C and all that (s)he means for us. For the joy and happiness (s)he has brought to her/his paents, grandparents, her/his (sisters and brothers) and to her/his wider family. Be with her/him in good times and in hard ones. Help her/him in life to find fulfilment and joy. Help us to keep the vows we have made tonight and to be true to our baptism.

Through Jesus Christ.

**Amen**

### **Hymn**

### **Benediction**

Go in peace. Celebrate this new life in the body of Christ and may grace, light and peace, from God, the three-in-one, be with us all.

**Amen**

Alan Paterson

## Sacraments

Lord you once gathered  
With the twelve apostles  
In an upper room  
To share a special meal.  
It's still remembered  
By Christians world-wide.

We gathered on the twelfth floor  
Friends and family  
To share a unique moment  
With a special person,  
Daughter  
Grand-daughter  
God-daughter  
Sister  
Cousin  
Niece

Small and vulnerable  
Enfolded with love  
Welcomed into the world  
Now received into God's family.

Signed with the cross  
Symbol and token  
Of Our Lord's eternal victory.

Y Mochyn Daear