

Thanksgiving for the birth of a child

The dedication of parents and the blessing of children

This service is offered as an example. Ministers and worship leaders are free and encouraged to choose appropriate Bible passages, and to write or prepare their own prayers and material to use alongside or instead of the examples here.

Where possible the act of thanksgiving should follow the reading of Scripture and proclamation of the Word. It is most appropriate when other children in the congregation are present. The act looks forward to baptism at a point in the future and is therefore not a substitute for baptism.

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Introduction

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures for ever.

Psalm 106:1

We come together as part of the family of God. We welcome especially ... A ... and ... B ... , who have come to give thanks to God for the birth of their child ... N ... , to seek God's blessing upon *their child (children)*, and to dedicate themselves [again] to the responsibilities of parenthood. We share in their thanksgiving. We acknowledge the claim of *this child/these children* upon the prayers and support of this church both now and in the years ahead. We welcome *them* as Jesus welcomed little children; and we affirm that it is the duty of parents and the Church together to show the love of God in their lives, so that in due time this child may come to confess *their* own faith in Jesus Christ, and be baptised.

The Word

One or both of the following readings are read.

We read in the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures):

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

We read in the New Testament:

People were bringing little children to [Jesus] in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them

Mark 10:13-16

Thanksgiving, dedication and blessing

All stand. The Minister asks the parents:

Do you thank God for the gift of ... N ... ?

We do.

Do you, as parents, dedicate yourselves to God?

We do.

Do you promise so to order your lives that ... N ... will be surrounded by love and goodness?

We do.

Where parents are not members the following question may be omitted:

Do you promise, by God's help, to provide a Christian home for ... N ... and to bring *them* up in the faith of the Gospel and the fellowship of the Church?

We do.

If there are older children in the family the Minister may include a suitable promise for them to make.

May God bless you and give you grace faithfully to carry out these promises; and may God grant you joy and patience, love and peace.

To the congregation:

On behalf of the whole Church of Jesus Christ, we undertake to provide for the instruction of ... N ... in the gospel of God's love, the example of Christian faith and character, and the strong support of the family of God in prayer and friendship.

Do you promise to pray for ... N ... , and *their* family, and to support *them* as you are able, sharing with them Christ's love?

We do.

Then the Minister, laying one hand upon the child's head, says:

The blessing of God, the source and fount of all life, be upon you.

The blessing of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, God's well-beloved child, be upon you.

The blessing of God, present with us through the tender love of the Holy Spirit, be upon you, this day, and always.

All **Amen.**

or

... N ... , the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, now and always.

All **Amen.**

or the blessing of Aaron:

May God bless and protect you,
May God smile on you and be kind to you,
May God look on you with love and bring you peace.

or

God is the One who'll bless and keep you;
yours is the radiance from God's face.
God is the One who calls and meets you;
yours is the promise of God's grace.

God is the One whose favour holds you;
yours is the gift of love to claim.
God is the One whose peace enfolds you;
yours is the bearing of God's name.

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Suggested tune: Spiritus Vitae ('O Breath of life, come sweeping through us')

or as at Rejoice and Sing 420

The Minister or Elder may present a Bible to the parents.

Prayers

God our creator, we thank you for the gift of ... N
We thank you for the love that prepared for *their* coming and welcomed *them*
into the world,
and we rejoice with ... A ... and ... B ... in their hopes for the future.
Be with them in their home; guide them in the upbringing of their child
and deepen their knowledge and love of Christ.
Give us grace so to live that they, their family, and every kind of family,
may find in the Church
a source of strength and love.
God of love, we commend ... N ... to your care.
Give *them* health of body and mind,
happiness and fulfilment in *their* days,
and in due time draw *them* to come to you in baptism,
to make *their* own profession of faith in you,
and to commit *their* life to Christ.
May *they* grow in kindness, goodness and service to others,
and learn to walk in the ways of peace, courage and love;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour,

All **Amen.**