

What is Thanksgiving?

To give it its full name, it is a “Service of Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child”.

It is not a second-class form of baptism, but something totally different which can be sufficient on its own, or used as a prelude to baptism if people would rather wait until a child is older before they are baptised.

A service of thanksgiving is an opportunity for parents, family and friends to come together to give thanks for the miracle of the new life that God has entrusted to them. The birth of a child is often a time when people, who might otherwise rarely think about spiritual or eternal questions, find an inner desire to acknowledge that something far greater than just a biological reaction has taken place! But many parents know that they are not ready to make the deep statements of faith and commitment that are involved in the Baptism service. The service of Thanksgiving is especially suitable for families in that situation.

It is also very suitable for when a child has been adopted into a family.

While the service order below refers to a single child and two parents, it is equally suitable for use with more than one child or for a single-parent family.

In this service, the love and welcome offered by Christ and his Church is the same as it would be at a service of baptism, but parents and godparents (here called ‘supporting friends’) are not asked to make any statements of personal faith, nor any commitment to bringing their child up as a regular worshipping member of the church.

The child is received by the minister and given God’s blessing; he/she is prayed for along with prayer for the family and for their home. If, at a later date, parents do wish to make the deeper commitment implied by bringing their child to Baptism, that is still available and will be of deeper significance.

While the service of Baptism will normally be integrated within the normal Sunday morning service, a Thanksgiving could just as meaningfully take place as a separate service just for the family.

The order of service is as follows (*N* is used throughout to represent a name, whether child or parent(s)):

Introduction

The minister welcomes the people and introduces the service.

All The works of the Lord are great:
his mercy endures for ever.

All Mary gave birth to a child and called him Jesus:
he will save his people from their sins.

All He will be called the Prince of Peace:
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 and Sermon

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

(Mark 10:13-16)

Thanksgiving and Blessing

*Parents and supporting friends stand and come to the front.
One of them presents the child to the minister.*

The minister says

Do you receive this child as a gift from God?

Parents **We do.**

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

Parents **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 says

What name have you given this child?

A parent or supporting friend replies

His/Her name is N.

The minister takes the child and 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.

All **May *he/she* 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

God, the Father of all, bless *N and N*
and give them grace to love and care for *N*.
Give them wisdom, patience and faith,
help them to provide for *N'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 addresses the supporting friends and says

Will you do all that you can to help and support *N and N*
in the bringing up of *N*?

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

The minister addresses the wider family and friends and says

Will you do all that you can to help and support this family?

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

Prayers

This prayer is said by the parents

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

*The minister may say additional prayers ending with the Lord's Prayer
in either the traditional or contemporary version.*

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.**

OR

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.**

Ending

The minister says a suitable blessing.