

## Pastoral Notes

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.

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.

## Thanksgiving for a Child

### Private Celebration

#### The Greeting

*The minister may say*

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.**

*All*

*From Easter Day to Pentecost this acclamation follows*

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

*All*

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

*A hymn or song may be sung.*

#### Introduction

*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*

*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(s) and Sermon**

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

*A sermon may be preached.*

*A hymn may be sung.*

**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 fulfill 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.**

- 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.**

## 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.**

**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.**

## Additional 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.**

## 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*

**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 (page 8),  
ending with the Lord's Prayer.*

## The Lord's Prayer

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 this 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.**

## Supplementary Texts

### Suitable Bible Readings

*If the readings for the day are not used.*

Exodus 20.12  
Isaiah 9.2,6-7  
Psalm 20  
Psalm 128  
Psalm 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