

Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

The Dedication of Parents and the Blessing of Children

Where possible the act of thanksgiving should follow the reading of Scripture and the sermon or another form of 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.

1. Introduction
2. The Word
3. Thanksgiving, Dedication and Blessing
4. Prayers

1. 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 *son/daughter* N,
to seek God's blessing upon *him/her*,
and to dedicate themselves [*again*]
to the responsibilities of parenthood.

We share in their thanksgiving.
We acknowledge the claim of this child
upon the prayers and support of this church
both now and in the years ahead.

We welcome *him/her* 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
his/her faith in Jesus Christ and be baptized.

2. 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 him 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

3. 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 *him/her* 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 the Lord bless you and give you grace faithfully to carry out these promises; 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.

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

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

Amen.

or

N, the LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you
and give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26

Amen.

*If the minister does not use the Aaronic blessing
it may be sung by the congregation (R&S 420).*

The minister or elder may present a Bible to the parents.

4 Prayers

God our creator, we thank you for the gift of N.
We thank you for the love that prepared
for *his/her* coming
and welcomed *him/her* 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 and their family
may find in the Christian fellowship
a source of strength and love.

God of love, we commend N to your care.
Give *him/her* health of body and mind;
and in due time draw *him/her* to come to you in baptism,
to make *his/her* own profession of faith in you,
and to commit *his/her* life to Christ as Saviour and Lord.
So may *he/she* serve you
and, at the last, share the joys of your eternal kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

