

Celebrating the gift of a child with Christ Church Clifton



Space for notes and questions:

Introduction

Firstly, many congratulations on the arrival of your child. We look forward to helping you arrange the most suitable service to help you, your families and friends give thanks to God for the wonderful gift of new life.

This leaflet answers some of the common questions about the options available to parents who wish to arrange a church service to celebrate the gift of a child.

Is Christ Church the right church for you?

In order to ensure that you will be happy to have your service here, we warmly invite you to come along to some of our Sunday services – to get a feel for what our church community is like – and check that you're comfortable being part of it.

In particular, at a baptism, parents and godparents promise to bring up their child within this church community. Our church family will welcome you and your child(ren), and commit to pray for you and them. So you need to be sure that you are happy to join us!

What is the right sort of service for you?

We offer three sorts of services (baptism, dedication, and thanksgiving), each with a slightly different feel and content. There will be a chance to discuss the suitability of each for you when we meet.

On the following pages are the actual words that are used in the different services we offer. Please look over them carefully, as they involve weighty promises, which we know you will want to take seriously.

Once you have read through the services, we will be in a position to help you decide which will be most appropriate for your family at this point in time, and then discuss a suitable date.

1. Baptism service

Overview

The focus of this service is on God's promise of forgiveness for those who turn to him. Parents and godparents are asked detailed questions about their faith and discipleship, and make weighty promises about bringing the child up to know and love Jesus. The child is named as water is poured upon him or her.

Who is this service for?

This service is for committed Christian parents who see Christ Church as their spiritual home. Due to the nature of the service both parents and godparents should be happy to publicly declare their personal faith in Jesus.

Why do we baptise people?

There is much in the New Testament that encourages baptism. But perhaps Jesus' final words to his followers are most worthy of comment here: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, *baptising* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28.18-20) So we baptise people in obedience to Jesus' command.

It's interesting to note that this command comes straight after an outrageous claim – that Jesus has *all* authority in heaven and earth – one of his clear claims to be God in the flesh! It's because Jesus has such authority that we want to obey him, and baptise people into his name.

Jesus also makes it clear that baptism is only the beginning of our journey of faith. Jesus wants disciples (followers) who have been taught to obey him in every aspect of their lives, not just people who've been baptised.

What does baptism signify and achieve?

Baptism is a sign of God's promises on three levels:

- Of forgiveness – Jesus' promise to wash our sins clean if we turn to him.
- Of our old lives dying with Christ on the cross, and rising again with him into a new life of faith through the resurrection.

- Of God's covenant with his people. The baptism of a child of Christian parents is as much a declaration of the 'child's standing in the covenant people of God', as was circumcision in the Old Testament. This is no guarantee of eventual faith in Christ, and obedience to his will, but in both cases the child is given the sign of God's grace. A marker of belonging.

There's nothing magical about baptism in itself, it doesn't make a child a Christian. But it marks the parent's commitment to bring the child up in a Christian home and as part of the local church family; regularly praying for and with them, teaching them the scriptures, and modelling Christ-like living.

As part of the baptism service, the church makes a commitment to welcome the child into our family, loving them and helping to nurture their faith. Together we pray that the child will come to know Jesus for him or herself as they grow up. When someone feels ready, as an adult, to declare their own Christian faith and discipleship – that's when their baptism (as a child) can be seen to have become fully effective.

How many godparents should we choose?

Every child should have at least three godparents. Ideally, two of the same sex and at least one of the opposite sex.

Do parents and godparents have to be baptised themselves?

The parents of a child *do not* have to be baptised themselves to have their child baptised. However, if the parents of a child being baptised, have not been baptised themselves, we would encourage them to consider taking this step of faith. One of the clergy would be delighted to talk this through with you, if it is something you would like to explore.

Godparents *must be* baptised themselves and old enough to make some serious promises on behalf of the child. However, there are ways to include unbaptised friends or family members in the service. This could be by appointing 'supporting friends' in addition to the godparents.

Alternatively you could opt for having a thanksgiving service rather than a baptism. When you meet with a member of the clergy they will be able to discuss the options with you.

The order for the baptism service is as follows:

The Introduction

We say together

**Lord our God,
we have come to worship you;
here in your presence our families shall rejoice,
because you have blessed us;
here we present to you the offering of our lives;
here we pledge our obedience to you;
here we pray for our children, that we and they may do your will.
Lord our God, we have come to worship you.
Amen. (from Deuteronomy 12)**

The service leader says

This morning we have the great privilege of baptising **N** and it's with great joy that we welcome you into the Church family. Trusting in the promises of the God, who died to save us all, we ask God to do something which **N** cannot do for themselves, nor can we do for them: that, in due course, the Holy Spirit will lead them to saving faith in Jesus Christ. **N** parents and godparents will affirm their own faith in Jesus and make promises on their behalf.

A young person asks the parents and godparent:

Will you be to **N** living examples of the Christian life,
loving **him/her** as Christ has loved you?
Will you pray with and for **N**,
read the Bible with **him/her**,
tell **him/her** of God's work today
and encourage **him/her** to follow Jesus for **himself/herself**?
With the help of God, we will.

The Decision

A young person says

Baptism is a sign of what it means to follow Jesus, a dying to sin and a rising to new life with him.

The service leader says

Today, you affirm your own willingness to follow Jesus on **N's** behalf. Therefore we ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

I repent of them.

Do you turn to Jesus Christ as Saviour?

I turn to Christ.

Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord?

I acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord.

Do you come to Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life?

I come to Christ.

The Profession of Faith

A young person addresses the church family and leads the profession of faith:

Together with **N's** parents and godparents, let us affirm our common faith in the one true God, whom the bible reveals as Father, Son & Holy Spirit.

There is one God and Father:

by him all of us and everything that is was made.

There is one Lord Jesus Christ:

**through his blood, shed on the cross,
we have forgiveness of sins.**

There is one Holy Spirit:

by him God lives within us, a seal guaranteeing us eternal life.

This is the faith of the Church:

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

(from 1 Corinthians 8 & 12)

The Parents pray

God our Father, thank you for giving us **N**,
and entrusting **him/her** to our care.
Help us to be trustworthy parents.
Make us patient and understanding,
slow to anger and quick to forgive,
that **N** may always be sure of our love, as we are of yours.
Help us to build a family and home with you at its heart.
Through our love, may **N** come to know Your love,
and choose to follow Your son Jesus Christ as **his/her** Saviour and Lord.
Amen.

The Baptism

The leader baptises the child

N, I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The leader marks the child with the sign of the Cross

N, Jesus died for you. Receive the sign of his cross.
Do not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified.
**Fight valiantly as a disciple of Jesus
against sin, the world and the devil,
and remain faithful to Jesus to the end of your life.**

Presentation of the Bible

The service leader says to the parents:

As followers of Jesus we look to the Bible as God's written word to the world.
Inspired by the Holy Spirit, it reveals God's truth and his great love for us.

A Bible is presented to each family, with the words:

Receive this Bible as a gift from your Church family. May it be a source of
wisdom, encouragement and joy as you seek to follow Christ.

The Welcome & Blessing

*The leader invites the church family to welcome the newly baptised and God's blessing upon **him/her***

N, God has received you by baptism
into the covenant family of his Church.

**We welcome you into the Lord's Family,
and ask his blessing upon you.**

May the Lord bless you and watch over you.

**May the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you.**

May the Lord look kindly upon you and give you His peace.

**May the Lord deliver you from the powers of darkness,
banish all evil from around you,**

preserve you from all harm,

defend you on every side,

and, through the work of his Holy Spirit,

lead you to know Jesus as your Lord, Saviour and friend.

Amen.

2. Dedication service

Overview

The focus of the dedication service is on the parents, who (together with godparents) make promises and ask for God's help in raising their child to know and love Jesus. The child is named as a prayer of blessing is said.

Who is this service for?

This service is ideal for committed Christians who want to give their child the option of being baptised as an adult. Due to the nature of the service both parents and godparents should be happy to publicly declare their personal faith in Jesus.

Why dedication?

One of the scriptural roots of child dedication is found in the Old Testament, in 1 Samuel 1:27–28, where a godly woman named Hannah prayed year after year for God to give her a child. He answered her prayer and she gave birth to a son, whom she named Samuel. When Samuel was born, Hannah prayed these words: *“I asked the Lord to give me this boy, and he has granted my request. Now I am giving (sometimes translated as: dedicating) him to the Lord, and he will belong to the Lord his whole life. And they worshiped the Lord there.”*

In Luke chapter 2 of the New Testament, following the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph took the infant Jesus to the temple and dedicated Him in the same way.

In both cases the child would have been circumcised during the dedication, as a symbol of being part of the covenant people of God. However, following Christ's death, resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Day of Pentecost - the birth of the Church - circumcision has been replaced by the covenant sign of baptism in Christ. Colossians 2:9-12 (NLT) says this:

“For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority. When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. For you were buried with Christ when you were baptised.

And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.”

Therefore, dedication today is an opportunity for parents, friends and the church family to give thanks to God for the birth of a child. The parents, godparents and church family make a public commitment to model the Christian life to the child and nurture them in the ways of Christ. Together we pray that the child will come to know Jesus for him or herself as they grow up. When they feel ready to declare their own Christian faith and discipleship, as a teenager or adult, they can be baptised.

How many godparents should we choose?

The Church of England does not have a hard and fast rule about Godparents for children who are dedicated. However, we would encourage you to have at least three godparents. Ideally, two of the same sex and at least one of the opposite sex.

Do parents and godparents have to be baptised?

The parents of a child *do not* have to be baptised themselves. However, if the parents of a child being baptised, have not been baptised themselves, we would encourage them to consider taking this step of faith. One of the clergy would be delighted to talk this through with you, if it is something you would like to explore.

Godparents *must be* baptised themselves and old enough to make some serious promises on behalf of the child. However, there are ways to include unbaptised friends or family members in the service. This could be by appointing ‘supporting friends’ in addition to the godparents.

Alternatively you could opt for having a thanksgiving service rather than a dedication. When you meet with a member of the clergy they will be able to discuss the options with you.

The order for the dedication service is as follows:

THE INTRODUCTION

A child says

Lord, open our eyes
that we may behold your glory.

A child says

Lord, open our ears
that we may hear your call.

A child says

Lord, open our hearts
that we may know your love.

A child says

Lord, open our hands
that we may show your generosity.

A child says

Lord, open our lives
that we may reveal your glory.
Amen.

The leader says

Today, ***N and N*** wish to dedicate ***N*** to God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to seek His blessing upon ***him / her***.

THE PROMISE

An older person says to the parents

Will you be to ***N*** living examples of the Christian life, loving ***him/her*** as Christ has loved you? Will you pray with ***him/her***, read the Bible with ***him/her***, tell ***him/her*** of God's work today and encourage ***him/her*** to follow Christ for ***himself/herself***?

The parents respond

With the help of God, we will.

A young person says to the Godparents

Will you do all that you can to help and support *N and N* as they seek to be godly parents? Will you pray for *N*, and show *him/her* by your example what it means to know and love the Lord Jesus and be part of his church?

The godparents respond

With the help of God, we will.

A child says to the church family

Will you love, support and pray for *this family/these families*, help to guide them in the truth of God's word, and walk with them in the way of Christ?

The church family responds

With the help of God, we will.

THE DEDICATION

The parents pray

**Father God,
we thank you for the gift of our *son/daughter, N*.
Help us to be trustworthy parents.
Make us patient and understanding,
slow to anger and quick to forgive.
Help us to build a family and home with Jesus at its heart.
Today we dedicate *him/her* to you,
praying that *(s)he* will come to know and love
Jesus as *his/her* Saviour and Lord.
Amen.**

PRESENTATION OF THE BIBLE

The service leader says to the parents

As followers of Jesus we look to the Bible as God's written word to the world. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, it reveals God's truth and his great love for us.

A Bible is presented to the family, with the words

Receive this Bible as a gift from your Church family. May it be a source of wisdom, encouragement and joy as you seek to follow Christ.

THE BLESSING AND WELCOME

*Godparents, family members or friends may pray for the **child(ren)***

The leader takes the child in their arms, and says

As **N's** church family, let us ask God's blessing on **him/her**

N, we welcome you

as **a child/children** dedicated to the Lord God.

May the Lord bless you and watch over you.

May the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you.

May the Lord look kindly upon you and give you His peace.

May the Lord deliver you from the powers of darkness,
preserve and defend you on every side,

and, through the work of his Holy Spirit,

lead you to know Jesus as your Lord, Saviour and Friend.

Amen.

3. Thanksgiving service

Overview

The birth of a child is a cause for great celebration. Many people are overcome by a sense of awe at the creation of new life and want to express their thanks to God, but without making the weighty promises about their own personal faith, that form the basis of the baptism and dedication services.

The thanksgiving service provides an opportunity for parents and families to give thanks for the birth of a child and to pray for family life. Parents and supporting friends make promises, and the child is named as a prayer of blessing is said.

Who is this service for?

This service is ideal for parents who wish to give thanks to God for the wonder of the new life they have received, but are not yet ready to make the specifically Christian promises and prayers of the other services.

The order for the thanksgiving service is as follows:

The leader introduces the service with some words from the Psalm 139

The birth of a child is a cause for great celebration. As a church we recognise the wonderful truth about God, in Psalm 139:13-18, which says:

*“For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;^{[L] [SEP]}
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,^{[L] [SEP]}
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;^{[L] [SEP]}
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
How precious to me are your thoughts about me, O God!^{[L] [SEP]}
How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them,^{[L] [SEP]} they would outnumber the grains of sand.”*

We are here today to express that sense of awe at the creation of a new life, and to give thanks to God for *these* children, with *their* family and friends, and to support *their* parents in their responsibilities with prayer and love.

Do you receive *these children* as a gift from God?

Parents: We do.

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

Parents: We do.

The leader prays:

God our Creator, maker of all that is living,
We praise you for the wonder and joy of your creation.
We thank you for N: for a safe delivery,
and for the privilege of parenthood.
We thank you that we are known to you by name
and loved by you from all eternity.
Above all, we thank you for Jesus Christ,
who through his death on the cross
has opened to us the way of salvation. Amen.

Leader: What name have you given this child?

Parents: His / her name is N.

As parents, you will need the help of God, and of family and friends in bringing up N.

Jesus grew up in an ordinary home, so 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, and come in due course to a living faith in His Son Jesus Christ, who died that, through faith, all people might become children of God.

**Parents: God our Heavenly Father,
in giving us N you have shown us your love.
Help us to be trustworthy parents.
Make us patient and understanding.**

**We ask that N may always be sure of our love
and grow up strong, wise and secure,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The leader says to the supporting friends:

Will you do all that you can to help and support N and N in bringing up N? Will you set N a good example by the words you say, and the kindness you show to him/her and others?

Sponsors: With the help of God, we will.

The leader says to congregation:

Will you do all that you can to support this family in the good times and the bad, and be faithful friends in the years ahead?

All: With the help of God, we will.

The leader may take 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.

The leader prays for the parents & supporting friends:

Heavenly Father, your Son Jesus Christ, shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home. Bless N's home. Help N and N to make it a home full of laughter and fun - where mistakes can be made without fear, and where anger quickly turns to forgiveness. Give them wisdom, patience and faith, that they may bring N up in the ways of truth and love, through your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRESENTATION OF THE BIBLE

The service leader says to the parents

As followers of Jesus we look to the Bible as God's written word to the world. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, it reveals God's truth and his great love for us.

A Bible is presented to the family, with the words

Receive this Bible as a gift from the Church. May it be a source of wisdom, encouragement and joy. Take it as your guide for life.

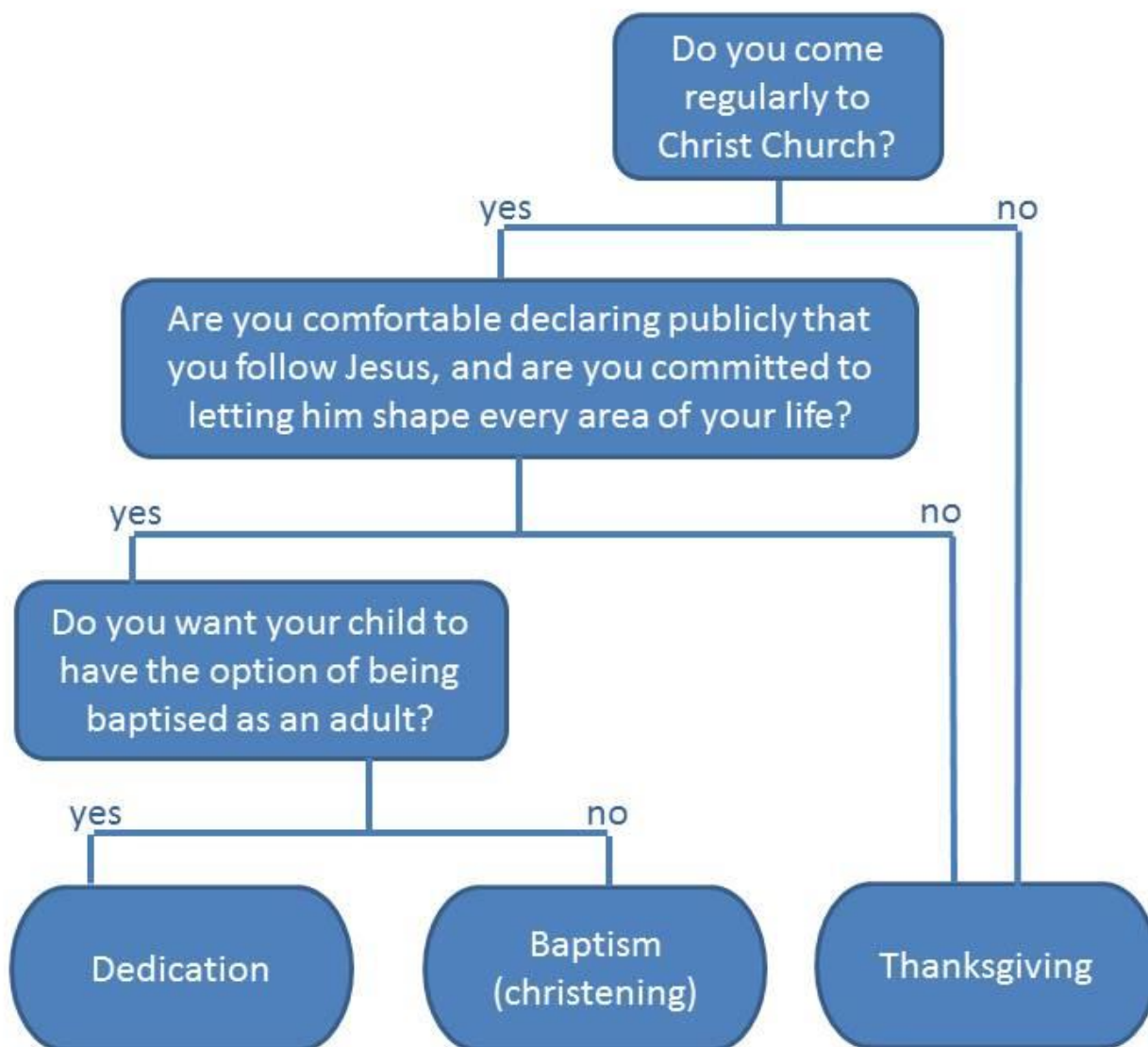
THE BLESSING

The congregation prays for the child:

**The Lord bless you and watch over you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord look kindly upon you
and give you His peace;
the Lord deliver you from the powers of darkness,
and lead you to faith in Jesus Christ.
The Lord bless you and keep you,
now and for ever more.
Amen.**

So, which is the right service for our family?

Obviously, every family is different. But as a general rule of thumb, we let our decision be shaped by the following sorts of factors:



It is important to emphasise again that no service is ‘better’ than another. We are committed to helping you find the service which best fits your beliefs and practises.

A child who is dedicated or for whom we hold a thanksgiving can still be baptised later on – either as an infant, or as an adult. A child who is baptised as an infant can, as an adult, renew their baptism vows (by full immersion if they wish) and / or be confirmed.

When does Christ Church hold baptism / dedication / thanksgiving services?

These services are held on Sunday mornings, as part of our normal Sunday worship. The Church of England now discourages 'private' afternoon services – because each service is about welcoming the child into the church community.

We hold these services regularly in our All-age Services, when children stay in for the whole service. These services are normally about 50 minutes long and geared towards engaging all ages. They are interactive, fast-paced, and not to mention, great fun! They also have the advantage that your guests' children do not have to go to separate children's groups.

We don't mix the different sorts of services – ie, we don't hold both a baptism and a dedication on the same day, or both a baptism and a thanksgiving on the same day. The first booking for a date will set the type of service held.

What do I do now?

Once you've had the chance to look through the various options, please call the church office on 0117 9736524 (or email office@ccweb.org.uk), to arrange a time to meet with one of the clergy. The aim of this meeting is to discuss which service type is appropriate for you and to talk through possible dates. Please note we don't generally discuss dates until this meeting.

If you've got any other questions, please don't hesitate to ask!

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