

Thanksgiving and Baptism



All Saints' Church
Preston on Tees



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CONGRATULATIONS!

The birth of some children is carefully planned; others come as a surprise. But it is always a wonderful privilege - and a great responsibility - to care for a young child. So it's very natural to want to give thanks to God for one of the greatest gifts he has ever given you, and to ask for his blessing on your child and your family. We will be delighted to discuss the possibilities of a service for your child.

TWO OPTIONS

Things have changed a little in the Church since we were children ourselves. Parents now have two options. You can choose a Thanksgiving Service for your child. Or you can choose a Baptism Service.

COMING TO CHURCH

We strongly encourage you to come as a family to All Saints' as often as you can over the next few months. Thanksgivings and Baptisms take place during Sunday services, so you will probably see one and understand it more fully. In addition, many families start coming to church after the birth of a child because they know they will need God's help in caring for their new member. Coming to All Saints' will help you decide whether you want to make the knowledge of Christ's love part of your family life.

The main services for families are at 10:30am. Babies are very welcome; we like their noise! There is a room at the back for feeding a child in privacy.

OPTION ONE: THE THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Thanksgivings take place within a normal Sunday service. They are very happy occasions and quite brief. The whole service will last about 1¼ hours; the Thanksgiving will be about 5 minutes of that time.

WHAT HAPPENS?

There are three main parts in a Thanksgiving Service:

- Thanking God. As the name suggests, the whole purpose of the service is to say a heartfelt thank you to God for his wonderful gift to you of your child. The minister will say these prayers on your behalf.
- Praying for your family. We will pray for your child, for any other children you may already have and especially for you as parents, in your responsibility of bringing up this child.
- Receiving a book. You may be given an illustrated book, about the life of Christ.

This is:

- as a permanent reminder of the Thanksgiving Service
- for you yourselves to read as soon as possible, to understand Christ and his teaching more fully
- for you to read to your child in a few year's time, when (s)he is old enough to understand

WHO COMES?

We encourage you to invite as many people as you like to the Thanksgiving Service: Godparents, grandparents, family members, neighbours and friends. Often people have a big party afterwards.

OTHER DETAILS

The child can come dressed entirely as you wish. Some parents bring their child in a Christening robe; others bring them in their ordinary clothes. There is no fee for a Thanksgiving Service.

WHY THANKSGIVING?

There are 3 main reasons why an increasing number of families choose a Thanksgiving Service:

- They simply want to give thanks to God for their child. This is their main wish and they have no desire to do anything more.
- They are making no promises. In the Baptism Service parents make some very serious promises and commitments (see below); but there are no promises made when parents opt for a Thanksgiving.
- They would prefer their child to experience baptism when (s)he is older. Parents may still pray with their children, read them Bible stories and tell them about Jesus. Delaying baptism until after your child is old enough to make his or her own choice to follow Christ means they will experience baptism, and later be able to remember it. All sorts of people are now choosing this option.

OPTION TWO: THE BAPTISM SERVICE

Baptisms also take place within a normal Sunday service, usually at 10:30am on the third Sunday of the month. The whole service will last about 1¼ hours; the Baptism will be about 10 minutes of that time.

WHAT HAPPENS?

There are three main parts in a Baptism Ceremony:

- Parents and Godparents make promises. At three points in the Baptism Service, parents and godparents together make promises to God about their own Christian faith and about bringing up their children to know Christ and to come regularly to church.
- Water is poured over the child. The minister will take your child into his or her arms and pour water three times over the child's head, baptising 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit'.
- The child is welcomed into the church family. Baptism is a commitment to bring up your child as a member of the church community. So the whole congregation welcomes its newest member.

THE PROMISES

Quite rightly, people want to know what promises they will be making to God, so that they can decide whether Baptism will be right for their family. The words you speak standing before the congregation during the service are reproduced below. Essentially you will be making three promises:

- To pray regularly for your child.
- To teach your child about Jesus: his life, teaching, death and rising again to new life.
- To come to church regularly as a family.

You will be given a certificate to show that your child has been baptized and that you have made these promises. There is no fee for the service or the certificate.

PREPARATION

There is a lot to consider in deciding to have a Baptism for your child. A minister, or a couple from the church with children of their own, usually arrange to hold two relaxed preparation sessions at your home. The church also holds free Christianity discovery courses called *Alpha* from time to time and some parents find that it's good to be able to think things through and ask questions in a relaxed atmosphere. Several parents only decide at this time whether to ask for a Baptism for their child or opt for a Thanksgiving Service instead.

WHY BAPTISM?

Note that the word "Christening" is not used because it can be misleading. Some people think that this ceremony is what makes someone a Christian but only a decision to turn away from sin and believe in Jesus can do that. There are two main reasons why families choose the option of Baptism:

- They want to make a commitment to God. Many couples feel they made promises before God at their wedding, and this has helped them to be better husbands and wives. Now they want to make promises to God after the birth of their child, because they feel this will help them be better parents.
- They want to become part of All Saints'. Baptism is a way of identifying you and your family with your local church. Many couples want to do this after their child has been born, even if they have not been regular churchgoers in the past.

GODPARENTS

It is normal to have Godparents, whichever option you choose: Thanksgiving or Baptism.

HOW MANY?

You may have as many Godparents as you want. Traditionally, a boy has two Godfathers and one Godmother; a girl has two Godmothers and one Godfather. You may have chosen Guardians for your child, people who would bring up your child if something happened to you. It is not necessary for the Guardian to be the child's Godparent; they have quite different roles.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

All Godparents (Thanksgiving or Baptism) promise to help your family in two ways:

- To care for your child, taking a special interest in their Godchild.
- To pray for your child, asking God to bless your family.

If you choose to have Baptism, the Godparents also promise:

- To encourage your child to learn about Christ and to take your place in the local church.

For Baptism the Godparents must themselves be baptized. We can send them a letter explaining their responsibilities.

APPENDIX

The affirmations and promises made in the Baptism Service by parents and Godparents (in **bold**).

Parents and godparents, the Church receives these children with joy. Today we are trusting God for their growth in faith. Will you pray for them, draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ? **With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism these children begin their journey in faith. You speak for them today. Will you care for them, and help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church? **With the help of God, we will.**

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.
To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I 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 Christ as Saviour? **I turn to Christ.**

Do you submit to Christ as Lord? **I submit to Christ.**

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life? **I come to Christ.**

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